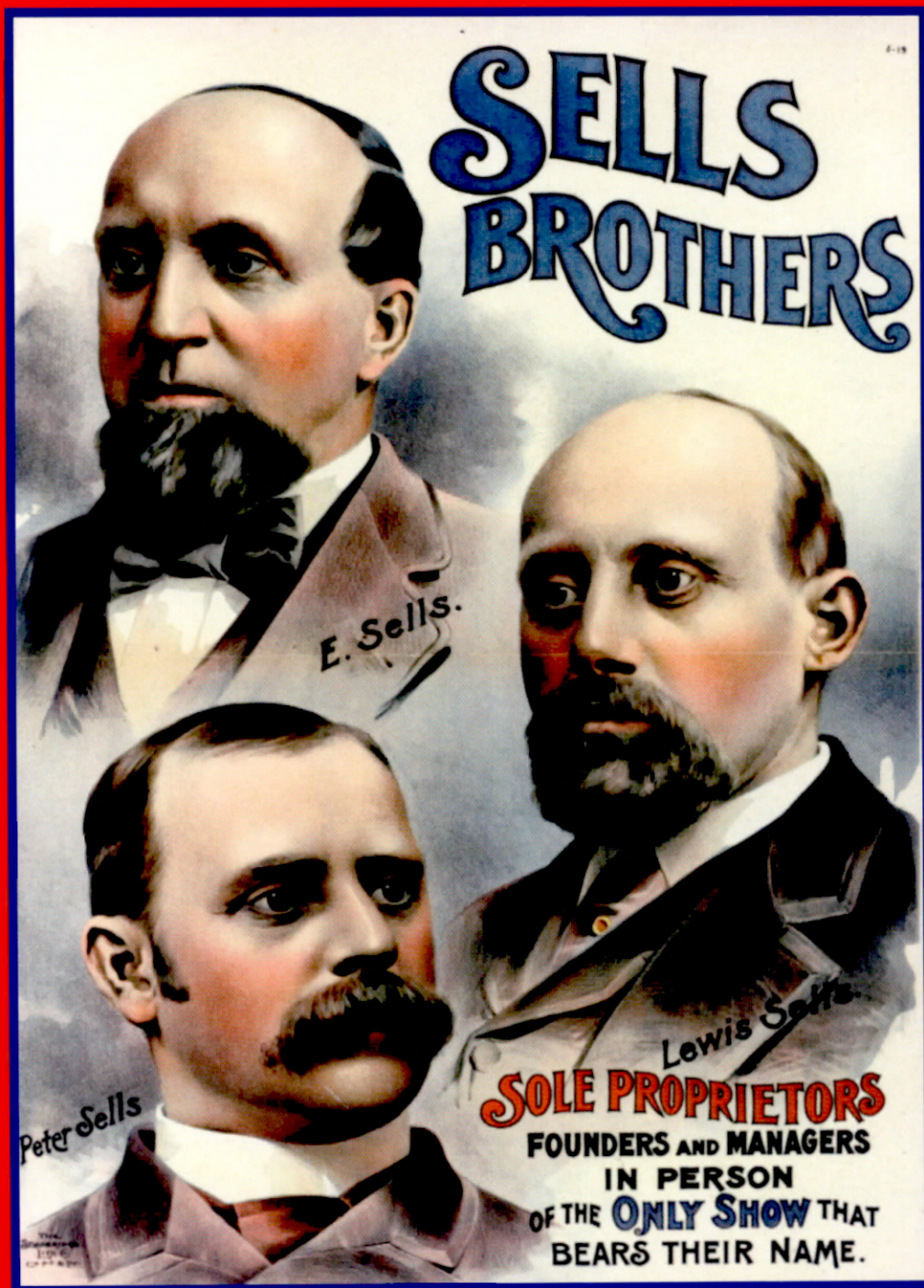


BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JULY-AUGUST 2006



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Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor

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THE FRONT COVER

Sells was one of the most used names in circus history. The original Sells brothers were Ephraim (1834-1898); Lewis (1841-1907); Peter (1845-1904) and William Allen (1836-1894). The brothers grew up in Columbus, Ohio.

Their first circus toured in 1872 using the Paul Silverberg title. In 1873 the show was called Sells Bros. Mammoth Quadruple Alliance Combined with Paul Silverberg's Monster Menagerie, Museum, Aviary Roman Hippodrome, Oriental Caravan and Trans Atlantic Circus. In 1874 it was titled Great European Zoological Association, under the Supervision of Sells Bros. Variations of the name were used in 1875, 1876 and 1877. The circus was placed on rails in 1878 and was called Sells Bros. Great European Seven Elephant Show. It traveled on 32 cars. They also toured an overland show called Anderson & Co.'s Great Worlds Circus and Menagerie. In 1880 the second unit was called The New Pacific Circus. In 1881 the number two show was put on rails and

renamed S. H. Barrett's Circus. The Barrett show toured through 1887. Barrett was a brother-in-law of the Sellses.

The Sells Bros. added the Barrett title in 1888 and continued with the combined names until 1890.

From 1891 through 1895 the circus was called Sells Bros. Enormous Shows. In 1896 James A. Bailey bought an interest in the show and it became the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. From 1898 until 1904 W. W. Cole joined in the ownership. After the death of Peter Sells in late 1904, the show was auctioned in Columbus, Ohio on January 10, 1905 to settle his estate. James A. Bailey bought the entire outfit for \$150,000. In a pre-arranged deal, he immediately sold half interest to the Ringling brothers. Bailey and the Ringlings operated Forepaugh-Sells until Bailey's death in 1906. Later that year the Ringlings bought Bailey's interest from his estate, operating the show themselves in 1907. The Ringlings revived the Forepaugh-Sells title in 1910 and 1911.

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BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
2515 DORSET RD.
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A separate use of the Sells name was by William "Willie" Sells, a son of Allen Sells. In 1890 he and Charles Andress operated the Sells & Andress Circus. In 1892 and 1893 Willie and J. N. Rentfrow operated the Sells & Rentfrow Circus.

In 1900 and 1901 Willie Sells joined with James H. Gray to tour the Sells & Gray Circus. From 1902 to 1905. Sells and Martin J. Downs operated the Sells & Downs Circus.

Willie Sells joined the Great Floto Circus to form the Sells-Floto Circus in 1906. This famous title continued until 1932, under various owners. The Forepaugh-Sells titled was revived in 1935 when it was added to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus name.

The next use of the Sells name came many years later when Robert A. "Little Bob" Stevens in 1946 called his small truck circus Sells-Sterling. In 1960 and 1961 William Griffith toured Adams Bros. and Sells Bros. in 1962. The final use of the Sells name came in 1960 when Frank McClosky, Walter Kernan and Bill English opened the Sells & Gray Circus. This show toured until 1976.

The Sells Bros. lithograph on the cover was used in 1893. It is from the Pfening Archives.

NEW MEMBER

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4420

The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West Show 1903

By Richard A. Georgian

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This paper was presented at the 2006 Circus Historical Society convention.

This article is an extract from the author's manuscript *Buffalo Bill's Deceit, the Cossack's Curse*. The focus of his book is the history of the "Russian Cossacks" who rode in over fifty American tent shows between 1892 and the 1920's. The book will contain a complete Luella Forepaugh-Fish show inventory, a list of all those who filed claims against Susie Barton, the season's route, and several newspaper articles, that are not published in this paper

Luella Jordan was a native Californian, born in November 1858. Her parents were from Missouri. Luella, an opera singer, married John A. Forepaugh (1852-1895) of Philadelphia, a son of George W. Forepaugh, and a nephew of Adam Forepaugh the famous circus owner. He worked in Adam Forepaugh's organization for many years.

John A. Forepaugh. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.

John Forepaugh had been a Philadelphia city councilman and was a candidate for the mayoralty nomination in 1894. He was a casino and theater owner in Philadelphia, and also managed a Masonic Temple Theatre in Baltimore. John A. Forepaugh died on June 8, 1895, and one of his pallbearer's was George F. Fish, the



advertising manager for the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. George was a native Pennsylvanian born in August 1862. In 1897 George Fish and Luella Forepaugh co-authored a drama titled "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde or a mis-spent life." The drama was in four acts and adapted from Robert Louis Stevenson's novel. The play was performed many times at the Forepaugh theater on Eighth Street in Philadelphia, which Luella inherited at John's death. Luella married George F. Fish in 1899. This was the second marriage for both Luella and George. Luella Forepaugh-Fish sold her interest in the Forepaugh theatre during the 1901 season. The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West Show was incorporated in Camden, New Jersey, on 13

December 1901, with a capital stock of \$30,000, with a principal office in Camden. The incorporators were Luella Forepaugh-Fish, John A. Barton, and Lewis Starr. During the 1902 tenting season they set up offices at 1021 Betz Building, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. John A. Barton and his wife Susie contributed the menagerie from the Shallcross & Barton Show as their investment, and they became managers.¹ Harry W. Semon, the Buckskin Bill general agent during the 1902 season, cancelled his con-



Alexis Georgian.

tract and signed with Luella Forepaugh-Fish for 1903. He then signed his father Si "Pop" Semon to work on the advance team. Luella and George engaged George W. Forepaugh to tie the Adam Forepaugh name to their show. The *New York Clipper*, on January 3, 1903 ran the first help wanted advertisement for the show. In the spring of 1903 the show moved its headquarters from Philadelphia to St. Louis.

Alexis Georgian (the author's grandfather) by age thirty-two was a six-year veteran of American tenting shows and was fluent enough in English to create his own management company. On January 12, 1903, he signed an agreement with

the Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West show to furnish six "Cossacks" and eight Arab acrobats for the 1903 tenting season at \$325 per week, in addition to board and transportation. Alexis also had a contract with Dimitri Tsintsadze to furnish Cossack riders to various shows including Adam Forepaugh-Sells Brothers Circus, Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, The Great Cole Younger and Frank James Historical Wild West, and Indian Bill's Historic Wild West. Alexis spent \$75.00 on telegrams, cables, advertisements and communications to place Dimitri's friends in these shows. He also paid \$25.00 to Dimitri to house some of his riders in New York, until their shows were scheduled to begin.

Alexis, his riders, and the Arab acrobats arrived in St. Louis on Sunday, April 5, 1903 around 8 o'clock in the morning. Alexis stayed at the Planters' hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Fish and other members of the staff stayed, while his men were quartered on a ranch near Ferguson, Missouri. Alexis received a request from the Luella Forepaugh-Fish show's management to provide six additional riders before the April 18 opening. Alexis signed on six more "Cossack" riders on April 18, 1903, at a sum of \$20 per week for each man, in addition to board and transportation. Alexis paid \$152 for the transportation of Dimitri's group of six riders from New York to St. Louis.²

The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West held an illuminated parade on Friday night, April 17, 1903, and opened at Handlan Park, Grand and Laclede Avenue, on a rainy Saturday, in opposition to the Adam Forepaugh-Sells Brothers Circus. Luella's performance used Buffalo Bill's wild west formula, except that it also carried a small circus menagerie. The price of general admission was 25 cents, with reserved seats 25 or 50 cents extra, or arena box seats for \$1. The exhibition opened, as all wild west shows did, with a grand review and rough rider introduction. The next two hours were choreographed similarly to the familiar program employed in



The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West steam calliope built by Sullivan & Eagle in 1903.

wild west shows. The featured attractions included: The Demon Rider who rode two coal-black horses bare back; Miss Stewart and her trained horse "Dude;" Sharpshooting by "Cherokee Bill" (William Cahoon who played Buckskin Bill in the 1902 season); "Lone Star May" (May Mackey), a horseback marks-woman, Arab acrobats, the Lawrence Trio famous pantomimist, Alexis Georgian's troupe of fourteen "Russian Cossacks," and a troupe from the United States Cavalry. A grand salute closed the show with each nationality bearing the flag of its country, while the band played *Marching Through Georgia*.

The eight days in St. Louis ended on Saturday, April 25, with the first jump, reported to be 20 cars with 2 advance cars, from St. Louis to Jefferson City, Missouri. The show left behind the Lawrence Trio after they filed an attachment for their pay. They also left 75 canvas men in Lexington, Missouri, and the town was talking about taking a new census.³

April showers brought more than May flowers; it brought mud and no profit. Touring Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa during the month of May, the show lost twenty-three performances due to rain. Management, performers, and workers all understood the requirement to "make the nut," for example, if their daily costs were \$1,000, then they needed to pull in around 4000 customers at twenty-five cents a seat. Everyone knew that their pay depended on squeezing as much as possible out of each patron. The torrential rain of May cut deep into

those profits and into troupe morale. In Sedalia, Missouri, the wagons were stuck up to their hubs in mud and only one performance was given, and this was repeated in town after town. Two or three days of constant rain made the canvas almost impossible to lift and weighted down the wagons even further into the mud.

The climax to the month of rain came during the last four stands in Iowa. At Council Bluff, Iowa, where the show pitched its tents in a sea of mud, the working horses were worn out and riding horses were pressed into labor. The roustabout gang went on strike and refused to pull canvas or drive a stake until they had some sleep. Half of the United States Cavalry soldiers announced they too were on strike due to lack of sleep. The show went on, and during the performance one of the finest horses in the company stopped still, staggered, laid over and died. Despite the mud, the heartbroken horse and the strikers, the show managed to pull in 3,000 of the citizens of Council Bluff.⁴

The next day, the show was washed out in Atlantic, Iowa, and in Des Moines only fifty-seven people attended the afternoon performance and the evening show was abandoned. Meanwhile, the advance men had contracted about \$85 of debt in Pocahontas, their last stand in May, but the show failed to stop and those accounts went unsettled.

June started with a ray of hope, sunshine. The sun dried out the arena and opened the towners pockets, which helped fill the show's empty coffers. The Pocahontas Sheriff caught up with the show in Esterville, Iowa and served an attachment for the unpaid debts. On Sunday, June 7, the company paid its employees as little as they could get away with. Si Semon, the old experienced circus manager, knew the signs of failure and left the show in the middle of June, signing on with its opposition, Forepaugh-Sells Brothers. The show pushed into the industrial and mining towns of Minnesota. The press became more

hostile, reporting on the con games, short-change artists, gambling tables, and the old Milwaukee beer car that traveled with the show, selling beer at 30 cents a bottle.

Alexis, Dimitri and everyone attached to the show started to relax as the sun kept shining and tickets were sold. The Sunday lay over in Washburn, Wisconsin was eagerly anticipated since it was the second payday in June. Sunday, June 21 arrived and Alexis only received enough to pay his troupe twelve dollars a man for the two-weeks work. The *Washburn Times* reported on the showmen's commendable behavior, even on a payday. The showmen did not have sufficient money to get rowdy. "Shortly after the Monday, June 22 evening performance the oil lamp and general light car [wagon] caught fire and was totally destroyed."⁵

Thereafter the evening performances were seriously handicapped by the poor temporary light rigs that were used.

The Forepaugh-Fish organization was restructured in mid June with John A. Barton as manager. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on June 25, 1903 Alexis and the new Forepaugh-Fish management signed a new contract. Alexis agreed too "faithfully and satisfactorily render" service for \$285 per week with transportation and board. The new contract was effective on July 1, 1903, and did not include Dimitri Tsintsadze and his six riders.

Alexis and his fourteen riders arrived in Minneapolis as the show's star attraction. They looked forward to a three-day stand to close out the month of June, and the collection of their back pay. Alexis did not receive the back pay, instead his photograph and a lengthy article about the "Cossacks" was published in the *Minneapolis Sunday Times*, June 28, 1903. Alexis was suspicious of manager John Barton's motives. Was he trying to flatter him? This article also misrepresented him and his troupe of riders. Alexis suspected the show would break up, and he needed to disperse some

of his men. Alexis paid transportation costs of \$100, the railroad fare from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Washington, D.C., to Dimitri Tsintsadze, for four Georgian riders on June 30, 1903. These four Georgians joined the Cole Younger and Frank James Wild West show. Alexis continued to look for positions for the remaining three riders and a means to collect his overdue salaries.

Alexis Georgian, who had joined the American Socialist Party in Chicago, knew a socialist attorney, George Leonard of Minneapolis. Alexis contacted Leonard and arranged for a writ of attachment, seeking \$1,153.33 for payment of salaries due since June 7, 1903. They obtained the writ from the Sheriff of Olmstead County, where the show would stop in Rochester, Minnesota, on July 3. Mr. Leonard also contacted the Sheriff of Winona County, in case they failed in Rochester. Leonard many years later wrote his reminiscence and told the story of attaching a wild west show.

He wrote, "My plan was to attach posts for the tent. I phoned the Sheriff at Rochester in advance. He did not have enough force to attach, but I promised to have the six Cossacks to help. On the way to Rochester, I met Wirt Wilson, and told him of my mission and he gave me his card of introduction to George Simpson, county attorney in Winona, should I fail in Rochester. The Arab acrobats were No. 8 on the program. I was to wait until after their performance and they were taken to the hotel, excepting the 'Cossacks,' and then attach after the show was over.

During the day I had a phone call from the Sheriff that the town was in the hands of the show people and that the Mayor has been frightened out of his wits, that gambling and liquor were in control. But I decided to go ahead. The county attorney called his lawyer friends together and they all decided that there would be bloodshed should the attempt be made. We therefore abandoned the place and decided to serve the writ on Luella after the performance and attach the North West Railway, which was taking the show to Winona. About midnight or after, Alexis Georgian, the Sheriff and I proceeded to the railroad yard from which the train carrying Luella was to pull out, but we were pelted with stones and 'bravely' retired, the sheriff waving the writ and Alexis his saber.

"We decided to follow the show to Winona where the show was on a holiday (July 4). Doubt arose as to whether service [of a writ] on a holiday could be effective, a case or two in Pleading and Practice convinced me that service would stand up because the defendant was about to leave the state with intention of escaping liability. Whether applicable or not, the chief thing was to attach, and if the Sheriff was in doubt or refused, to consult his attorney and convince him that it could be done.

"The Sheriff, 6' 3", stood up, went to his phone, phoned George Simp-

Letterhead used by the show in 1903.

THE LARGEST AND BEST WILD WEST EXHIBITION NOW IN AMERICA.

LUELLA FOREPAUGH-FISH
INCORPORATED
WILD WEST SHOWS.
A HERD OF GENUINE
FULL BLOODED BUFFALOES, WILD BEASTS,
ELEPHANTS, CAMELS, ELK AND MEXICAN BULLS,
COWBOYS, COWGIRLS, SCOUTS,
INDIANS, SQUAWS, PAPOOSES, COSSACKS.
SPECTACULAR
ILLUSTRATIONS OF PAST WESTERN HISTORICAL FACTS.

HARRY W. SEMON,
GEN'L. AGENT,
RAIL ROAD CONTRACTOR.

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SUITE 1021-23,
BETZ BLDG. PHILA. PA.

son, and I had him come down to his office, after telling him about the introduction from Wirt Wilson. I showed him the two cases I relied on, retained him as counsel by giving him \$50.00. He rounded up the sheriff's deputies and city police officers so that there would be at least two of them at each cash box just after two o'clock, when the crowd was inside and before the cash was delivered to the manager.


"Upon attaching, the manger showed up, called for Mr. Lees, a very prominent lawyer, who later became an associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota. George Simpson and I took a position close to one of the entrances and waited for the attorney. Mr. Lees, confident of his position that the attachment would not hold, confronted us with the proposition, it being a holiday and the service was not any good. "You can't do it, George," turning to George Simpson. Simpson promptly countered, "But we did it." Even if Lees was right, he could do nothing on that day, as no Court was available and no order could be issued dissolving the attachment in time to have the show move onto Austin. We got our dough then and there."⁶

Alexis and his riders continued to perform for the show under their new contract, however, the contract did not cover all the riders. On July 7, Dimitri Tsintsadze and several other riders quit the show in Austin, Minnesota, and were stranded there for two months. Alexis' troubles were not over. On Tuesday, July 14 in Marshalltown, Iowa, he was arrested for not paying his employees and taken to jail when he refused to pay a bond. The incident was reported in the local *Evening Times Republican* newspaper.⁷ The case was dropped later that day when Mr. Georgian settled with his employees and paid all costs.

The daily monotony of parades and performances, loading and unloading, whether in rain or shine were broken by atypical events. A ticket seller and roustabout were arrested for the attempted kidnaping of a young girl in Davenport, Iowa.⁸ A Sioux Indian was left behind in Rockford, Illinois,⁹ and a cowboy with a poisoned arm ended up in a hospital.¹⁰ A pole wagon crashed

COMING IN ALL ITS ENTIRETY
TO
Clinton, Iowa
Saturday, July 18th
TWO PERFORMANCES
At 2 and 8 P. M., Rain or Shine, at
Second and Parker Streets.

THE
LUELLA FOREPAUGH-FISH
INCORPORATED.



**WILD WEST
SHOWS**
Grand
Military Tournament
AND
**ROUGH RIDERS
OF THE WORLD**
~~~~~  
**FREE STREET PARADE**

A typical Fish newspaper ad.  
through a bridge floor up to its hub.<sup>11</sup>

Luella Forepaugh-Fish, who collected the tickets, felt the receipts were not in proportion to the audience size. She uncovered an organized scheme by which people were steered away from the ticket wagons and paid cash directly at the door. She telegraphed her husband, who was working with the advance team, to meet her in Janesville, Wisconsin.

The show reached Janesville from Beloit about two o'clock in the morning Saturday, July 25, 1903. The day

began as any other with the unloading and setting up on the lot, a place called Spring Brook. Alexis and all the other show people prepared for another ordinary stand, but early in the day rumors were spreading that something was liable to happen. George and Luella Fish huddled in attorney W. G. Wheeler's office, where they prepared affidavits. The afternoon performance was given along with an attempt by an Indian to kill Jerry Sullivan for insulting his wife. The fortune teller tried to hold up a farmer named Johnson for eight dollars as fair compensation for her reading. The show's boa constrictor condescended to eat his first meal since October the prior year, a meal of two Belgian hares and six hens.<sup>12</sup>

Sheriff W. H. Appleby served attachment papers upon the Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West show at 4:30 P.M. The attachments were sworn out by George Fish to cover a claim for \$15,409 and Luella Fish who claimed \$7,850, and signed by Judge Dunwiddle who assigned D. W. Watt as receiver.

The dining tables were buzzing with talk about the attachment. The grifters wanted to know if their con games were on for the evening. The performers discussed whether or not to prepare for an evening performance. The roustabouts, mostly ignorant of what was happening, grumbled about the change of routine and delay in dismantling the tents. The razorbacks ate in silence and went back to the train to wait and see what happened. The show was now technically under the management of sheriff Appleby and receiver Watt. The sheriff agreed to allow the evening performance using the receipts to partially pay some employees, but all other work stopped.

Sunday was a state of confusion. In the dressing tent a scene of disorder presented itself. Actors gathered their traps among the scattered trunks, saddles, blankets, clothing and articles used as props. A group played poker with their last pennies. At the North West depot, rough-necks, Mexicans, Turks, and cowboys gathered waiting for the Chicago bound train. The telegraph operator burned up the wire with messages seeking positions in other circuses.



Oscar Thompson, a cowboy, had his saddle stolen Sunday night, but it was found Monday along the road to Beloit. Alexis, his riders, and Arab acrobats decided to stay in Janesville to see what transpired. The Indians were not in the least worried. When they left the Pine Ridge reservation they presumed the show had filed a bond for their return. Their translator sent a telegram to the Pine Ridge Indian agent, seeking funds for their transportation home.

Mr. Watt and the sheriff arranged for breakfast Monday morning, and organized those who remained to start dismantling the tents, seats and other equipment. Mr. Watt scheduled a property sale for the following Saturday, August 1, 1903. There was no lunch and at five o'clock their last supper was served. The city of Janesville was not going to feed the show's remnants.

Oscar Thompson, Johnnie Blocker, Jake and Frank Gilman were clever cowboys who organized an exhibition on South River Street, Janesville, Tuesday evening. They collected over \$50 enabling them remain in the city until the sale on Saturday, with the hope of purchasing several horses. Alexis watched the cowboys conduct their street performance and wondered if he could do the same. The Georgian-Gurian riders and Arab acrobats were fortunate that Alexis, their manager, was working with them. He took care of their needs while he struggled to find new bookings.

The Indians on Wednesday learned the truth about their contract with the Luella Forepaugh-Fish show. They had not been legally hired, and no bond was paid to the government Indian agent. The Indian agent sent a telegram, it read: "No record of High Eagle or other Indians being absent. Must have left reservation without permit. Can't do anything for them. Should be prosecuted. BRENNAN, Agent."<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, back in Minnesota, Dimitri Tsintsadze and his group of Georgian were still living off the charity of some citizens of Austin. The Austin *Daily Herald* reported that Dimitri and his group did have some "dough." A poker game was observed with the "Cossacks" and they had over \$300 in gold on the

table. They were a strange sight walking around town in their heavy coats, Chokhas, during the August hot spell.

The receiver's sale was held at 10:00 Saturday, August 1, 1903. The advertised procedure was for the show to first be sold in parcels and later as a whole, and in case no bid for it as a whole was more than was offered for the parcels, the parcel bidders would get it. The aggregate sum of the parcel bids was \$12,410. Mr. F. J. Walker, president of the Erie Printing and Lithographing company then made a whole bid of \$12,510. There were no other offers and the auctioneer graveled the sale to a close. Mr. Walker leased the show to John Barton and hired Harry Semon to manage the show, and announced that he wished all the employees to remain.

An envelope used by the Fish show.



Chicago, Illinois, one-hundred and nine miles to the south, was the gathering place for many who had left the show. The Sioux Indians had gotten as far as Chicago, and were offered a pay raise from \$5 to \$7, but they refused to return. These Sioux were stuck at the Chicago Northwest railway depot Monday, August 3 through Wednesday, before assistance arrived. Once the word spread that the show was to hit the road again, several performers returned from Chicago. Alexis who at the last minute signed a new contract with John Barton, his third that season, was sent down to Chicago to find a lady wing shot.<sup>14</sup>

It took from three o'clock Sunday afternoon until almost three o'clock the next morning to gather all the show's equipment. The scattered

crews were difficult to reassemble, and the replacements did not know their jobs. The regular roustabouts had found work on local farms and preferred to stay where their salaries were assured. Additional delays were caused by a wagon overturning in Spring Brook and another falling between two of the flat cars. One more bad omen was the driving rain that hampered the loading operations, and caused the death of Jack Rooney, an eight-horse driver. Their first jump from Janesville to Appleton took place on Tuesday, August 4. They arrived at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and after a hurried scan of the situation, the managers decided to skip Appleton and push on to Green Bay, Wisconsin.

The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West was doomed after four days of rain with only two performances out of four scheduled. The two performances did not make the nut. Arriving in Ishpeming, Michigan, Wednesday, August 12, 1903, the Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic railway wanted paid \$500 and refused to move the outfit. The afternoon performance in Ishpeming was lightly attended. The cowboys and musicians refused to perform in the evening unless they were paid. Alexis made a loan of \$100 to Barton, even though he had not been paid.

Barton made a deal with the cowboys and musicians that he would pay them \$5 each after the performance. The evening performance was again lightly attended and during the performance the treasurer and four other managers left town. After the show the cowboys discovered they would not get their pay, they cleared the park of all the visitors, threatening them by displaying their guns, and a riot was barely avoided.<sup>15</sup>

After negotiations with the roustabouts the show was loaded, but the railway shunted it to a side track near the Moro mine of the Cleveland Cliffs Company. The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West, now owned by Walker and leased by Barton was finished; on Saturday, August 15, Walker shipped the equipment to Chicago for disposal and the horses



were sent to Erie, Pennsylvania, where a higher price could be obtained than in the west.

Alexis with his stranded seven Georgian riders, Arab acrobats, and the lady wing shot proposed they put together their own show. Alexis and his troupe rented some horses and gave a Sunday afternoon performance at Union Park to a large crowd. They charged twenty-five cents and made a neat sum. Alexis proposed to organize his little troupe and go on the road for the balance of the season giving similar performances. A few of the remaining acts fell in with Alexis, they included: Muly Ally, a champion acrobat; Lone Star May, the famous girl horseback shot; Harry Niece, a famous revolver shot and the Ishpeming city band. Their first engagement was in Marquette, Michigan, on Thursday, August 20.

They gave an afternoon exhibition of riding and shooting at the fair ground to a modest crowd. In the evening only a handful of people gathered at the opera house to see the performance. It was unclear if they made their nut, or if they continued on the road.

Alexis' friend Dimitri Tsintsadze was still stranded in Austin, Minnesota. By the end of August they were out of cash and had lost contact with Alexis. Dimitri and his companions were hired by the county fair in Austin to perform each afternoon.

#### Epilogue

Luella and George were through with tent show business. They lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, from 1904 through 1917. A newspaper in Arkansas, on October 27, 1905, reported: "Mrs. Luella Forepaugh-Fish, of Cincinnati, Ohio, the famous ex-circus manager, now lessee and manager of the John Robinson opera house at Cincinnati, visited her brother, Judge J. S. Jordan, here last Wednesday." They were lessees and managers of the John Robinson Opera House in 1905 and 1906. In 1907 they formed the Forepaugh



Alexis Georgian's Cossacks on Pawnee Bill in 1902.

Amusement Company and also managed the Olympic Theater until 1910. Luella and George's adaptation of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde was filmed for the first time in 1908. Luella and George from 1912 to 1917 were managers of the Empress Theater in Cincinnati. They returned to Philadelphia in 1918 and by 1920 George was a salesman and Luella a clerk and then their trail went cold.

Mrs. Fish lived as late as August 1958.

Harry W. Semon died in Oelwein, Iowa on July 16, 1904 while working with the Campbell Brothers Circus. Harry's father Simon "Pop" Semon died on September 6, 1910 in Mt. Vernon, New York. George W. Forepaugh in later years was the doorman for the Forepaugh Theatre, Philadelphia, and died of apoplexy at age 82 on June 4, 1910.

Alexis Georgian and Dimitri Tsintsadze returned in 1904 to the Buckskin Bill Wild West for a few weeks and then moved over to the Campbell Brothers Consolidated shows. Alexis in 1905 went bankrupt, left the tent show business, and moved from Chicago to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he married, ran a socialist newspaper, and ended as a truck farmer. He died in 1940. Dimitri continued performing with Campbell Brothers until the 1911 season where he contracted with the Young Buffalo Wild West. Dimitri was reported to have taken an American wife, but left her and returned to Georgia where he was the head of his village, had four daughters and one son, and died in

1929, age 50, of pneumonia.

John A. Barton and Susie, continued working in tent shows. He was with the Barton & Bailey Circus in 1915. He died December 10, 1921.

#### Notes

1. "Wild West Show Chartered," *Trenton Times*, December 17, 1902, p. 1 col. 1
2. Alexis A. Georgian v. Demetri Dcinsadze (Dimitri Tsintsadze), 107614, 4th Judicial District, State of Minnesota, (Jan 9, 1909)
3. "The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West show," *The Chillicothe Daily Constitution*, Missouri, Thursday, May 7, 1903, col. 3.
4. "Hard Luck for Circus," *The Daily Nonpareil*, Council Bluff, Iowa, Thursday, May 28, 1903.
5. "Show Car is Burned," *Ashland Daily Press*, Tuesday, June 23, 1903, col. 2
6. Reminiscences of George Leonard, Minnesota Historical Society, Manuscript #185, dated 1954, P24, Box 11.
7. "Cossack is Arrested," *Evening Times-Republican*, Marshalltown, Iowa, Tuesday, July 14, 1903. p. 7 col. 5.
8. "Two Wild West Men Left the Show," *The Davenport Democrat*, July 21, 1903, p. 6 col. 3.
9. "Bullet Crashes into Window of Residence," *The Argus*, Rockford, IL., Wednesday, July 22, 1903, p. 5 col. 4.
10. "Cowboy has a Poisoned Arm," *Rockford Republic*, Friday Evening, July 24, 1903.
11. "Circus Wagon through Bridge," *The Janesville Daily Gazette*, July 25, 1903, p. 5 col. 3.
12. "Indian wants to Kill White-man," *The Janesville Daily Gazette*, July 27, 1903.
13. "Indians Await Transportation," *The Janesville Daily Gazette*, July 30, 1903.
14. "Bad Luck for Wild West Show," *The Janesville Daily Gazette*, Monday, August 3, 1903.
15. "In Hard Straits," *The Daily Mining Journal*, Marquette, MI, August 14, 1903, p. 6 col. 3.



# HOW AND WHY I GOT IN THE CIRCUS BUSINESS

## KING BROS. CIRCUS

### PART TWO

By Bob Snowden

I negotiated with Floyd. The deal was to send Mrs. King so much each week for the title and he would route the show, handle the promoters, contracting agents and bill posters who would also lay the press. I explained that I had my own promoters and one contracting agent, Tom Huftle, who had been a contracting agent with the Miller Bros. show. He also turned out to be, I think, the best agent of all time. Floyd did not seem too pleased with me having my own promoters and agent. I found out why later.

We worked on the route together until the show opened, then I did not have time. I knew some of the spots because I had already had promotions in them. Floyd was going to jump me from Dalton, Georgia over Mt. Eagle in Tennessee, to another town in Tennessee. I said, "No Floyd we are not going to do that, we are going to set it down in a little town called Jasper." He said, "Son [he called everyone son], I never even played that with the two car show." I said I didn't care about his two car show. I knew my trucks and I knew about Mt. Eagle. In the 1950's some friends of mine had a flat joint roadside zoo and told me about cars that would heat up going up the mountain stopping at their little zoo.

Jasper turned out good. The town was too little at the time for a phone promotion. We did have, however, a sponsor to whom we offered 30% of the tickets they sold and 10% of the front door and if they sold more than

\$500 worth they would get 15% of the door. They sold \$800 worth. People used the tickets the sponsors sold which was unlike many phone sales where the crowds didn't turn out because people considered their ticket purchase a donation. So the sponsor's sale insured us of quite a few people coming out. The next day I hired wreckers to pull us up over the mountain and down the other side. Our motors and brakes were not used. Yes, it cost some money, but not as much as burning up a motor or wrecking a truck.

Floyd did the same thing many years later. He routed me up to Leadville, Colorado for one day and back down the same mountain the next day, which was totally uncalled for. When I realized it, it was too late, I rented the wreckers again and we did not have any problems. I did not know if he did it



Three King Bros. Circus trucks in 1961. Top to bottom is the generator truck, the prop truck and the ticket semi. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.



for spite or if he had a propensity to burn up motors and wreck trucks, because they told me later he did that with his own show. He was doing a few things to hurt the show at that time because I had cut out a lot of his "side money."

Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan bought out my partners and furnished a used side show top for the big top, a tractor to replace the office truck we had wrecked coming in, and a used semi and tractor they had bought from Peterson's pig act. They did not use the pig act after all and served the pigs in the cook house in winter quarters. I sold the 60' top back to Bob Ketrow. Outside of the side show top and the semi and tractor everything else was from the Duke of Paducah show.

So now the Duke of Paducah Circus had become the new King Bros. Circus. I put together a good performance. The Hugo bunch didn't come back because they didn't like the east. I made Roger Boyd the announcer, ringmaster, performance director, mailman, and purchasing agent, plus I gave him the snake show. I got Charlie Roark as side show manager and his wife at that time had a chimp act. He did magic, vent and Punch and Judy. He had been side show manager on Remo's show, Floyd's King Bros, King Cristiani Bros. and the Cristiani Bros. He broke in on the Ringling show in the side show doing Punch and Judy. He also married Betty Broadbent, the tattooed lady there and went on to the Cole Bros. Circus when Zack Terrell owned it.

I was glad to have Charlie. He was a good man and stayed with me 25 straight years, long after I went out of the tent circus business. He was a great man and great friend. I hired Chuck Schlarbaum as band director and gave him his first full band leading job. He had worked on Sells and Gray on the first winter tour. He worked for me many years on indoor dates and I also took him to Trinidad for 10 days. He was a great trumpet player. I had him and Isla and Duke Kamakua who did a side show Hawaiian act where he played guitar, sang and told the crowd a little about his native Hawaii. He was quite dark in color so he always wore Hawaiian

A 1961 King Bros. Circus newspaper ad.

leis around his neck because we were not integrated at that time. He also played drums that gave us a good band for a little show. Si Rubens always said, "Good music can make a mediocre act look good and a good act look great." He was so right.

I again leased the three elephant act, Helen, Ola and Katie, from the Miller brothers. Matt and Mary Laurish came back. We opened the season with a good performance. Huftle was going great with the booking. Our opening spot was Baxley, Georgia for its Shrine Club. Tommy called me and said he signed the contract on the hood of a hearse. Haw! Haw! The president of the Shrine Club was an undertaker. I am off to the next town.

I have a meeting with Walter and Frank about forming the corporations, like I had on the other show. They wanted everything to be in my

name. They were going to be silent partners and if everything went well we would form the corporations the next year. The proposition was that I would get 50% of the profits each week, plus \$125 expense money. They would split the other half 50-50. Half the concession money would be turned in to the office. The other half, the late front door after the ticket wagon closed and the sheriff sale would go into a fund we would divide three ways at the end of the season.

I guess they thought if anything went wrong they wouldn't be liable. After all they had a lot of money at the time. I did not blame them. Under the same circumstances I would have done the same thing. I didn't care. I had taken lots of chances for many years and I had what money I had well hidden. Of course Floyd King and the accountant knew they were my partners but to everyone else they were just good friends.

I was in Deland working on the route one day with Floyd. It was just before he moved up to New York. He said, "Son, you know you are not paying very much for the title and I'm doing all this work. You are going to be handling the money. I want you to send me something every week. The boys (he called Walter and Frank the boys) won't know anything about it." I said no to Mr. King. I don't operate like that. There were three things I learned in the carnival business, first, never cheat your partners; second, don't make a proposition you can't live with; and third, always give the fixer his correct end. He's the one who's keeping you out of jail. He told Walter and Frank that he tried me out for them and that I was honest and they had a good partner. They did not mention it to me for many months later. What he really did was beat me to the punch thinking I was going to tell them what he said, to cover his tracks. He was a sharp old man. I knew I was going to have to be on my toes.

We opened up the show and the promotions did well. This was a different deal than on the Duke of Paducah show. I had department heads. Roger Boyd was performance director. I told the performers they worked under his direction and I told



Roger if they had a complaint don't send them to me. "You come to me and I will tell you what to do." Also, I would never go to the performers about anything. If I saw something I wanted to change, I would tell Roger. I found out a long time ago no one can serve two masters. I couldn't do this on the Duke show. I had to do it all. I learned about being a boss long ago on the Lawrence Carr Shows where I worked for a fixer named "Middle of the Road Shorty." He had been on my first show in 1941. We had all the concessions on the show and I had 26 people under me. I discovered that any boss can fire people; the trick is get people to do what you want them to, but make them think it's their idea.

I had the same deal with the boss canvas man and side show manager as I had with Roger. I was not happy with the concession department at the time because I had given out individual stands who would hire their own seat butchers or work the seats themselves. I knew how to check concessions from the carnival. It's simple, but it takes a lot of time. Let's say the drink stand is charging a quarter. You issue 400 cups when they sell 400 you want \$100 and give them their percentage on whatever amount they sell. When you have several stands to check it takes a lot of time.

Kenny McConnell and his wife joined about a couple of weeks out. His wife was a performer who did web and ladder in the big show and helped him in the concessions. I made him a deal. He was to be concession manager (boss butcher). I gave him one third of all the concessions. He would hire his individual stand men and they in turn hired their own seat butchers and worked the seats themselves. Kenny was to have only two items himself. He turned my two thirds in to me each day. I would issue all the stock to him through the week. On Sunday we would check his stock and make our adjustments. It made it a lot easier for me and I had a better check on the stock. The only thing I had to watch out for was the ring in and the hype. The ring in is when the butchers brought their own cups and so forth, so they keep all the money. The

hype is when they charged more for the item than the check out price and pocketed the surplus.

If I saw something I didn't like I never said anything to the butchers. I went to Kenny. He stayed with me as long as I had the show and then went to the Beatty show.

I was getting calls from some of the promoters saying that Mr. King wanted them to send him a little something from each town he gave them. I told them to tell him that they worked for me, that he was only supposed to assign them. Floyd was at it again.

Mayburn Miller wired for me to call him. He said his brother R. A. had found a sucker who wanted to lease the elephants and pay twice the amount I was paying them, and they would send me a single small elephant. We were old and good friends I said sure, get the money. It was Penny Bros. and it didn't last too long.



The Calcutta Monster pit show semi in 1961.

I hated to loose them because two of them were good work elephants. Now we were going to have to pull the canvas up on the truck by hand.

Tony Gentry had three elephants, a good-sized Asian male, a smaller female named Bee and a very small female called Gypsy. He had sold them to a little free zoo park down on the eastern shore of Maryland. Slivers Madison went with the deal. He was a very classy elephant man. He had worked for a lot of big shows and also the MGM movie compound in Hollywood as did George Emerson whose brother Ralph owned a zoo in Connecticut and was also a good friend of mine. The elephants now were owned by two brothers named Connors who had slot machines up and down the coast. There were hundreds of them. They had this zoo to

attract the people to play the slots. The only place they were legal at the time was Nevada but they were tolerated there for years. I knew about the male elephant. He was bad and they wanted to sell them. I didn't know Slivers but I did know his brother Pinky who was elephant man for Pollack Bros. at one time.

I called Slivers and told him I would consider buying the two females but did not want the male, I knew about him. He talked to them then called me that they said no, but they would sell them all cheap if I also took the male. I told him to give the male to the Washington Zoo. I knew the director. He said they already tried that and the zoo wouldn't take the big male. I said I didn't want him either. "How bad is he, can you get up close to him?" Slivers said, "Sure, you just have to watch him, he's sneaky." I said I'd call him back. I called my vet and friend I had when I had my animal farm. I told

him what I wanted to do was put the elephant down, what about strychnine? I told him we could give it to him through the big vein in his ear. How much should I give him? He said it depended on the weight. He gave me a

formula for putting down a horse and said give it 10 times as much. I called Slivers and said what goes with the deal, he said truck and trailer, bull tubs etc. I said, "You put the male down, deliver the other two to the show, you stay one week, teach us the routine and I will count the cash out in their hands, no check, cash." They liked that.

To contradict the elephant list put out by *Circus Report* in 2002 regarding circus and zoo elephants. The Beatty show did not buy the elephants, I did. I later traded them to the show.

Business was good and everything was going smoothly which doesn't happen too often or for any length of time. Huftle calls to tell me Floyd had him come into New York for a meeting. He lost a day going in and a day going back to the route, and all he wanted was to tell him that he was the highest paid agent on either



King or Beatty, and that he wanted Tom to send him fifty dollars a week like the others were. Huftle told him no, that he worked for Bob Snowden, not for him. I told Huftle if he had any more problems with King to call me and I would straighten it out.

I could write volumes about my experiences the five years I had the King Bros, and Floyd King, but I won't. I am only going to skim some of the highlights.

I must mention here Tommy J. Huftle. Of the many contracting agents I have employed, Tommy was the best by far. He stayed with me until he died, and if he was living now and wanted to work I would be using him in some way today. He had a technique that was unique. I used it many times in the future myself. His approach was the following: First he and his wife traveled with a car and house trailer. The general agent would give him a series of towns. He would go to a town in the center, park his trailer and drive out to the various towns which it made it much faster. When he got in the first town he would call the mayor's office and say, "I am special agent T. J. Huftle." Then he would spell it out slowly "H-U-F-T-L-E, would you please let me speak to the mayor." He didn't say what kind of special agent he was until he got the mayor on the line, then he would say, "I am special agent for the big circus that's coming to town" and give the date. "I only have this day open, does your police department sponsor any events to raise money for their charities?" If the mayor said yes he would ask for the chief's name. "And by the way mayor, if the police for some reason can't do it, what civic groups or clubs here in town would you like to see make some money for their cause; our sponsors generally make a considerable amount of money."

If the mayor said the police he went to the chief and said the mayor sent him. That's a pretty good entree. If the mayor was not for the police sponsoring things then you bypassed them and went on to the next civic group and told them the same story. The special agent bit and the you only have the one date open gave the visit urgency and shot down the usual remark—come back next

Wednesday to the meeting. Tommy would remark, "I'm sorry I can't do that. Maybe we could call a special meeting or you could call a few of the members and ask them because the mayor would like to see you make the money." He more often than not would get them to do it. Sign them or not, it was then on to the next sponsor. I had told the agents to always start at the top, police, Shrine, and down the line to the Jaycees, American Legion and VFW. The Jaycees would generally book anything that came along. But that was the problem. The promotion was not very good because they called on local businesses too much. I always told the agents when you work a promotion correctly it takes the same amount of time to work the police or Shrine as it does the VFW. Huftle got five contracts in one day, three from one sponsor for different towns, and two others. Floyd was correct when he said Huftle was the highest paid agent. I took good care of him and he deserved it. I believe he was the most appreciative employee I ever had.

The 1961 season went very well. I had put together a good organization and hired another agent to help Tommy. King Bros. closed a week ahead of the Beatty show. I went over to Deland to see Walter and Frank. Walter had his trailer at winter quarters. Frank commuted back and forth to his house in Winter Park. I went in, and Walter said, "What do you know Snowden?" I said, "Walter I know one thing. If Floyd is going to handle the promoters I don't want the King title. We will call it Jones Bros." He said he was glad to hear me say that.

The King Bros. Circus big top, an 80 with one 40 and two 30 foot middles in 1961.



This was going to make a lot more work for me but I knew it had to be. Floyd was going to ruin my organization. I was religiously going down town every morning and seeing the police and fire chief and it paid off many times. Now I was going to have to rent a hotel room every day or two so I could use the phone to handle the promoters. Floyd was still going to route the show and he was one of the best. It seemed he knew every town in the country. He liked to follow the crops which did not mean that much by the 1960s. People had money all the time now. He would say apple blossom time in the spring and tobacco and cotton in the fall, son. He was also to handle the agents, but they would send me a copy of the contract direct so I could assign the promoters. I had some promoters who did better with some sponsors than others, so I assigned them accordingly. We formed the two corporations and agreed on salaries from the corporations.

I was to be paid \$1,000 a week and \$125 expenses. They were to get \$500 a week each and we had the same agreement with the concessions we had before and we were to keep the salaries going after the show closed until there was no more money, then go to the bank in the spring to borrow money to get the show out.

We bought a spool truck and a new 80 foot big top at the end of the season. The show was shaping up well.

Now that Kernan and McClosky were full fledged partners for all to know, I moved into the Beatty winter quarters for a few weeks. We decided to do a winter tour in Florida, opening in Deland January 2, 1962 and closing in Titusville the middle of February. They had hired Rex Williams as boss elephant man at the

end of 1961. He and Ava Coronas got married between Christmas and New Year's Day and spent their honeymoon on my show. They worked the Beatty show five act from Pete and Norma Cristi-



ani, the same act I had used on my first circus, the Duke of Paducah ball park show with Steve Fanning working the act. They also let me use several other acts from the Beatty show and with the acts that stayed with me we had a good show.

We had a good tour. We went all the way down the Florida keys to Key West and we had booked good sponsors. We netted thirty five thousand and had it in the bank before we opened the regular season on April 10. We had a lot of show people visit and there was one incident that should be mentioned, which of course occurred on a day when a lot of show people were visiting. The lot was by a large lake that had been a limestone pit. It was quite deep, had straight sides and it was quite cool that day. It was on a Sunday in Bartow, Florida. Rex took the elephants over to let them drink from the lake and Mary, the lead elephant, went right on in the lake. Rex stopped the others from going in and started calling her to come out, but she wouldn't come. Rex took the others back to the side show and chained them up, thinking she would follow, but she didn't. She couldn't get out because the sides were too steep. Rex was worried and telling me, "Here I have this act for the first time and I blow the lead elephant." I was worried too. I borrowed the elephants and this happens. I said, "Let's take her down to the end of the lake and see if it is any shallower. It wasn't. She is getting tired swimming up and down. Some of the visitors are offering suggestions, but actually they are getting in the way. Rex decided to swim out with a harness with a chain put a harness on another elephant and had the elephant on the bank pull and help her crawl out. After a few tries it worked. Rex took them over and chained them in the side show. I went to my trailer and got a quart of whiskey to give to Mary to warm her up. Rex was wet and cold. He said, "To hell with Mary, give me that," and he drank about a third of it in one drink. The rest I put in a bucket for Mary. From then on they were watered from the water wagon.

The entire season was a big financial success. It was 1962 and we were playing in Kentucky. Huftle booked Winchester, my home town, for the police department and made a big thing about it. "Hometown boy brings his circus home" made good press. I had him book it on a Friday, then go up to Mt. Sterling on Saturday, but leave open Sunday so I spend the day with my mother and father. Then on to Richmond. It turned out that visit was the last time I saw my mother alive. I sent a promoter named Sam Roper, a gentleman. He was a clean worker and always did well with police departments. I did not mind him representing me in my hometown. We had a big promotion and it was one of the biggest days of the season. They all came out to see the hometown boy's circus. Charlie Roark said it was the only day he ever had where he couldn't turn anybody on either come in. They would not get out of line.

I dedicated the afternoon show to my parents, and seated them first row center ring. The band played My Old Kentucky Home. Roger presented my mother with a dozen red roses. The performers bowed to my parents after each act. It was a touching and memorable day for me. Two days later in Richmond, Pietro Canestrilli's wife Joyce gave birth to their third child on Sunday, a girl (a real

Arnold Maley, on left, King office manager and Bob Snowden.



trooper gives birth on an off day). We called the newborn Kentucky Fried Chicken because Richmond was Col. Sanders' home town. The headlines that Monday read "Marilyn Monroe found dead."

Buckles Woodcock had broken a small elephant in his act to do a pyramid with the little elephant on top of the others. Rex wanted my little Gypsy so he could do the same thing. I wanted a big work elephant because I had spent several hundred dollars on wreckers that spring pulling trucks on and off soft lots. I called Walter and Frank but they were not keen on breaking up the five act. They finally agreed to trading Mary and Norma out of the five act for Gypsy and Bee. We had a spool truck, stake driver and now two work elephants. We were framed to move the show as good as could be expected. We were now on 10 show-owned trucks. We had metal fold up side show banner lines on the elephant truck, and on the hoof stock truck. Plus we had a cage truck with lion, bear, leopard, baboon and monkeys for the side show.

I don't think there was a 10 truck show at that time that made as much money as we did. It was the best net year we ever had.

Earlier that year I had C. C. Smith as my office man. He had been a contracting agent for many shows and at one time partners with Big Bob Stevens in a circus. We lost one of our agents so I sent C. C. up with Huftle. He was a good solid agent, but not as fast as Huftle. I hired Arnold Maley for office man. He had been with Floyd for many years and had been Floyd's partner in the last show Floyd ever had. After they went broke he went to the John Marks Carnival as office man.

We had a long season up to New England, out to Texas to Laredo on the Mexican border and back to Florida, all one day stands. Just before we closed Jack Joyce called with a proposition to take a circus to the Dominican Republic. Would I be interested? I said I was interested in anything that would make some money. He



said he would come over and talk to me and measure the equipment to see if it would fit on the boat.

He came over with his wife and it turned out, he and his wife had stood up for Arnold and Esma when they got married so they had a good reunion. I told him it sounded good and I would run it by my partners. He also told me he was going to play the New Orleans Shrine date that fall and he had a pony act for sale he wanted me to come and see.

After a lot of thought Frank and Walter came up with this logic. We had just had a big year. Castro was giving the U. S. trouble in Cuba. If the boat got sunk we would not have time to build another show in time for the 1963 season. I had not thought of that and I totally agreed. Jack got Dory Miller to go. They didn't have any trouble but they did drop Dory's generator truck in the water in Miami loading it to go over, ruining it. I don't know if it was a financial success or not.

I went to New Orleans to see Jack's pony act. I didn't buy it but I did see Ferry Forst the illusionist and it gave me an idea. I told Walter about it. He said I couldn't afford him as he got big money. I said, "I am not going to use him, I'm going to use my side show manager and it is not going to cost me anything."

I was interested in magic when I was a kid and gave magic shows in my backyard, I could do several small tricks. Charlie Roark was a good magician, besides being a very good ventriloquist. He did magic in the side show and pitched a magic bag there along with his other pitches, all of which I got a percentage of.

I bought a couple of big illusions plus a blooming rose bush, and an appearing and disappearing cane. We used the sword swallower's wife who Charley was using in the sword box in the side show. I was also getting a percentage of that. I told Charley to do the act in the big show and I would give him 100% of the sword box. We made the deal. The act went like this: He walked in the ring in tails and made the cane appear, picked up a bunch of green leaves, the band playing *Roses of Peccary*, and magically a beautiful bouquet of roses appeared. Then he

produced a girl from palanquin illusion, gave her the roses, finished with a very fast substitution trunk routine, made the cane disappear, bowed and left the ring. It was very well received. The butchers said it was the only act in the show where they could not sell a thing. The people would not take their eyes off center ring. To my knowledge I was the first to put illusions in the big show on a tented circus. Many more did it afterwards including the Beatty show.



The King Bros. cookhouse semi and dining tent in 1963.

They later hired Ferry Frost and he stayed until he retired. Little did we know Walter would not live to see it on my show or his. I really liked the act not just for the cost of it, but I also did not have to pay acts to fill the other two rings. He worked alone. We opened with the act in 1963.

McClosky called late one night in January 1963 to tell me Walter had died in New York, and Walter's wife Bonnie wanted to know if we would go up and bring him back. I met Frank the next morning at Orlando and we flew up. Frank hated to fly. He was a white-knuckle flyer. That afternoon we got a call from Bonnie that she changed her mind and was going to bury him up in his home town in Massachusetts because her father was very ill and thought it would be too stressful for him. Her father was Jack Hunt who at one time was manager of the Oriental Theater in Chicago, and was now managing the Trail Drive-In Theater, which Walter owned, in Sarasota. She and her sister and her husband would be up the next day.

Frank and I were rooming together in the Americana Hotel, the same

one Walter had died in. Frank only brought the clothes he flew up with except toilet articles and a fresh shirt. I had brought a couple of changes because I did not know how long I was going to be gone if we were to take him directly to Sarasota. I ribbed him about one hour cleaners. We were disappointed because Walter was loved by so many people and it was off season. It would have been the largest funeral Sarasota had ever seen. The town was still full of Ringling people, and both Walter and Frank were managers on the show before 1955. They had both broken in as young boys under Bob Reynolds, the boss property man on the Ringling show for many years. Walter was probably the most philanthropic circus owner of his time. He never said no to anyone and I personally saw him

go downtown in Sarasota where there was always a lot of old showmen hanging around different places. He would have five, ten and twenty dollar bills in different pockets. He would reach in his pocket and shake hands with them and leave the money in their hand. That's how you give money to people when you don't want anyone else to know; it's called duking them. I could have gotten anything I wanted from Walter, but luckily I always had money. He was missed by many. He was always for the underdog. He was a great, great man.

McClosky and I were friends of course but we were not close like Walter and I, but that changed. We roomed together for ten straight days and we became very tight. As long as we were partners we never had an argument, but we did exchange some short telegrams. We were very sad losing our friend and partner.

One night McClosky told me about when he and Kernan were young and Walter, an Irish boy from Massachusetts, and Frank, a Polish boy from Connecticut, had joined the circus. Walter's nick name was Punchy because he was a fighter and took no bullshit. His show name was Forbes. Frank told me that when the Ringling show closed that he did not



have very much money and that when Walter bought the Beatty show in 1956 he had put up Frank's end because Walter wanted him for a partner. I didn't tell Frank that I knew about it. Walter had already told me and also told me that he was raised in a poor Irish home, that his father drank heavily, and he used to go down to the city dump as a kid to find shoes to wear. He vowed then he was going to make money and he did.

Walter was a good gambler. He gambled on the inside, not the outside, and he was a sharp businessman. They don't build big hotels in Las Vegas from the winners; they build them from the losers. Frank was also a good businessman, but he gambled on the wrong side of the table. Frank had not saved his money. Another thing, I never saw Walter take over two drinks, but he did have a nice bar by his pool for his friends.

He also told me how Jerry Collins and Randolph Calhoun got involved in the Clyde Beatty Circus. When they wanted to switch to trucks in 1957, Walter had the cash but he couldn't show it. Jerry Collins now owned three dog tracks and Calhoun was his lawyer. They knew Jerry Collins years before when he was a motorcycle cop in Sarasota, and also later he had a Hudson car dealership that sold cars to a lot of the Ringling people. All Collins and Calhoun had to do was sign their names at the bank to get the trucks and money to make the change over. They didn't actually come up with one dollar cash. They got 47% of the corporation. But it did not mean anything. What they actually got was a new Cadillac each year and a trip to Europe. The show agreed to have a new big top delivered in Daytona Beach each year so Jerry could invite all of his friends to his circus during the Florida tour. He had dog tracks in Daytona, Sarasota and out in the Midwest. When he did get financially involved it was in 1967 when he bought out Art Concello and became full partners with Frank, then bought Frank out, donated the circus to Florida State University and you know the rest of the story.

One night in New York when we turned out the lights Frank said to



Charley Roark making a side show opening in 1963.

me "Bobby I have to have my cry," and he cried for thirty minutes so hard that I could hear his bed shake.

We were at the wake in Walter's sister's house. I was able to get Timmie Claiman on the phone (he's the man who introduced Walter and me). He and Bonnie talked a while. Afterward, she said she wanted to talk to Frank and me. We went upstairs where she said that Walter must of had a premonition because he told her if anything happened to him, he wanted me to go over to the Beatty show and represent his interest. Frank said there was no one he would rather have than me for a partner but what would we do with the King show, "look at the big season we just had." I did not want to go to the Beatty show. I was the total boss with the King show and making plenty of money.

Frank had also told me he thought Walter had a forewarning because he had said to him, if anything happened to him and the show started going bad to dump it; "don't stick with it until it breaks you. You are too old now to make a comeback, let it go."

As I said, Frank did not like to fly. We booked two staterooms on a train back to Florida. A lot of people flew up to Walter's funeral, including Jimmy Harrington from Puerto Rico. He was a good friend of Walter's and Frank's, and produced a big circus in San Juan each year using the Beatty elephants and some of their acts. He came down to Union Station to say good-bye and see us off. Jimmy was coming through the people toward us, and Frank said to me, "See that man coming toward us?" I said, yes,

that's Jimmy Harrington. Frank said, "He's going to be my new manager, but he doesn't know it yet." Walter had introduced me to him a couple of years before when Harrington and E. K. Fernandez were visiting the Shrine show at Orlando. Jimmy accepted McClosky's offer on the spot. He stayed one year, and he really didn't like it. I visited that fall when our shows were close together. Harrington had his calendar marked how many more days he had until the show closed.

We opened our 1963 season, sad for our loss. Walter had always wanted to take the Clyde Beatty Circus back to California because Beatty had a big name there with the movies he had made. That's where the Beatty show mostly played before 1957. He wanted to have a Beatty show east and Beatty show west. The Philadelphia Shrine date and Commack Long Island stand were the two biggest dates they had. Their opening spot of the season then was Commack indoors and a couple of weeks later under canvas in Philadelphia. The advance promotion there was the largest one of the season.

The show was always at Lighthouse Field in conjunction with a large carnival. Three men controlled everything that happened at Lighthouse Field. They got a percentage of everything, carnivals, circuses and concerts. Their names were Essner, Moonblatt and Quinn, two Jews and an Irishman.

The deal was like this. We were going to build another show the size of the Beatty show, buy four more elephants, get another cat act, call it Beatty Show East. The existing Beatty show would go west to the coast and play there. I was to have the eastern show and play Beatty's established route.

They had me come into Philly to meet with Essner, Moonblatt and Quinn to pitch them the idea. I will never forget it because it is worth mentioning that this trip was one of the only two times I left my show in the five years I had it. I got in of



course after the show was open. It was a tight backyard. I parked behind the side show banner line at the end of the side show top. At that time they had a canvas banner line. I could see the midway and bally platform. The spot was ten days and it was the largest grossing engagement the side show ever had, and it should have been. The big show didn't open until the side show made two complete openings. The Nerveless Nocks sway pole act was along side the bannerline. Tommy Hart was the side show manager and a good friend of mine and he used to brag about the big spot he had. But it wasn't Tommy, it was Ward Hall and the Nocks.

Tommy had brought in Ward to work the front for that date. The circus midway joined the carnival midway. Ward would call them down right in front for the big free act, the death defying Nerveless Nocks. The midway would pack solid. Ward would make his regular opening explaining what they were going to see in the side show and had some of the side show acts on the bally like any regular opening. Ward was at that time probably the best talker in the business. They had a few musicians from the big show at the side show. Ward introduced the Nocks, the big band played. They did their complete routine, their finish trick was sliding down the poles, all of them head first and stopping just before hitting the ground in front of them. It was thrilling. They did their bow, and the band would stop instantly. Ward would put up his price signs and say get your tickets at either ticket box, the side show is open now. It would fill up. There was no need for a second bally. They would wait till it emptied out and make another opening because the midway was still packed. The Nocks only made the first opening.

I met with each of the three men in my trailer separately, then all together. I always had a well stocked bar. I think I was a good host. I could speak a little Yiddish and the three of them seemed to like me. I explained that the big phone promotion was not because of Clyde Beatty in person, it was because they were calling for the Shrine. And it really was. But in the end they did not want to give up

Clyde in person. Little did they know they were going to have to, Clyde died two years later in 1965.

Everything was going great with the King show but Norma starts running. She would be on the way to the big top for the act following Mary, the lead elephant, and she would turn and run. We would go ahead, do the act with just Mary then go and round her up. She would tear up some fences and clothes lines, among other things. I kept telling Frank I wanted to trade her back for another elephant and he would say, "Oh it's just your elephant man." She kept running and one day she turned and ran up beside the big top. She turned as if to run into the front round end of the tent which was full of people. The electrician happened to see her and he picked up a seat board laying there and swung at her. She turned and ran off the show grounds. They say elephants won't run into anything they can't see through. We used to load small ones that were not broke to lead by using a side wall. I don't know if that crazy bitch would have run through the side wall or not. I thought maybe that when they broke up the five act she might have been herd bound to another one in the act and that was the problem. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. I had had it with that elephant. A couple of days before I had found out what Norfolk Island Pines cost.

One night we were tearing down. Arnold and I were standing by the office talking and I see the sheriff coming with some papers in his hand with a lady. I had met him that morning when I went down and gave him the tickets. He stopped before he got up to me and told the lady to wait there. He said, "Mr. Snowden she came to me with a complaint about your elephant knocking down some trees of hers. I told her you would take care of it, but she insisted on getting attachment papers and I have to serve them." I said, "No need for that I will take care of it now. We went back and I introduced myself to the lady. She asked if I had an elephant runaway tonight. I said no not exactly but the handler had been

distracted for a minute and the elephant had taken a stroll, what happened? She said my elephant had pulled up two of her Norfolk Island Pines. I asked how big were the trees? She said about six feet. I said how much did they cost. She said \$125 each. I told Maley to give her \$250 and get a receipt stating paid in full and that she would make no further complaints, and have the sheriff witness it. I thanked the sheriff for bringing her out and gave my regrets for their trouble. Another day in the circus business.

After the time she almost ran into the big top I didn't try to use her in the act anymore and left her chained to the truck in the side show. I sent a telegram to Frank, "If you don't want to trade me an elephant for Norma I will take a goat, or the next zoo I come close to I am going to give her away. I have bought fences, outhouses, clothes lines, small tool sheds and trees. I have had it with this elephant."

He said it's your elephant man, but he sent me Hattie which was a big old elephant that they had gotten when they bought the Beatty show in 1956. They delivered her to me in Oil City, Pennsylvania. The next day was their last day in Philly. The following day on the news, "Elephant runs at circus in Philadelphia damaging several cars." They moved to New Jersey and the news was, "Elephant runs into cemetery, turns over many tombstones."

I sent Frank a telegram, just four words: "How's your elephant man?" From then on she stayed on the picket line and McClosky sold her that

A King Bros. horse semi with banner line on side.





winter to a circus in Mexico.

All spring Frank had asked why don't you take the King show to the west coast and also let's raise the price of admission here in the east. I really did not want to go to the west coast because I was doing fine where I was. I for sure did not want to raise the price. I broke in the carnival business with Jews and they taught me to go for a gross, watch your nut and you will be all right. You have to gross money to make money. We were featuring price posters that read regular prices only \$1 for adults, children 75 cents. Our bill posters were putting them up beside our other posters every time they could. On the telephone we were only selling children's tickets. It is easier to sell odd price tickets than it is even price ones. "Would you buy a book of 15 tickets so 15 boys and girls can come to the circus that otherwise would not be able to attend, Mr. Jones, that would be only \$11.25." He will give you that a lot quicker that he will \$15. Remember the Jewish \$2.00, \$1.98. If you watch the TV tonight you will see that almost everything they pitch will end with 98 or 95 cents.

I agreed to go to the west coast if he would agree to keep the same ticket prices. I knew I was going to have to raise all of the other prices out there because everything was higher, but I insisted on keeping the 75 cent price for kid's tickets. We would just ask them to buy bigger books.

We opened that year in Florida and we went all the way up to Houlton, Maine on the Canadian border. Then we went west and played Douglas, Arizona on the Mexican border, and then on to southern California. The show played there 10 days and rented the fair grounds in El Centro as a winter quarters. We opened March 13, 1964, going up the coast all the way to 10 days in Canada. We came out in Idaho, headed back east and closed in Savannah, Georgia.

I believe history will confirm that I was the only day for day tented circus to ever go coast to coast and border to border twice in two years. I don't mean shows that played two and three day stands and took two or more days to put up. It wasn't easy.



The Hermann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions on King Bros. Circus in 1963.

I had a good performance in 1963. The Herrmanns joined in 1962 with their Royal Lipizzan Stallions. It was a big troupe and they had several acts: a four person riding act, a maximum and minimum (big and little horse), a two girl wire act, and featured the Lipizzaner Stallion maneuvers which finished with the capriole (airs above the ground), all four feet off the ground at the same time. Theirs was the only act to execute this under saddle in the United States at that time. They got a lot of media coverage but unfortunately it did not do us any good financially on one day stands. They stayed with me two years and went on to tour the most prestigious horse shows this country had ever seen. Many years later when they were playing Savannah, Georgia, I went to visit them. They had me stand up and introduced me as their first boss in America and that their first two years here were with me. After the show they had a big party for my wife and me.

Besides the Herrmanns, we had a principal riding act, two high school horses and a comedy horse I had bought from Count Roberto Vasconcello.

My front end was going along great. Huftle and C. C. Smith were doing the usual good job. Neil Burk and J. C. Rosenhem were contracting the Beatty show. Burk was said to be the most powerful agent in the business. He was the first to contract mostly by phone and telegram instead of visiting the sponsors in person.

The front end on Sells and Gray, McClosky's other show, had never been able to truly get organized.

Floyd was handling it all, agents, promoters, billposters. I think he had too much to do. Frank got the idea to split the agents up to help Sells and Gray. He decided to have C. C. Smith and Neil Burk book Sells and Gray, and Huftle and Rosenheim book King Bros. I didn't care who booked as long as he kept the show ahead properly. It cost me the same amount of money. Huftle was

going along fine as usual but Neil Burk was not showing me much. I guessed he was giving most of his attention to Sells and Gray. He kept slipping. I talked to Neil and he just gave me alibis. I could see this was not going to work. I sent Frank the following telegram: "Regardless of Clyde Beatty Circus and Sells and Gray Circus if Neil Burk does not produce this week I am not sending any more money to him. He will no longer work for King Bros. and I want C. C. Smith back here." I received this telegram back from Frank: "Why wait." Frank told me many years later that Sells and Gray never paid for itself. They had to build that show from scratch whereas they just had to buy out my partners to form King Bros. I already owned a third. Bill English, who was McClosky's partner in Sells and Gray, was supposed to work off his end, but it never earned enough money.

Another Frank story comes to mind. My boss butcher-concession manager Kenny McConnell bought a used school bus. He painted it white, built nice bunks, and put in a water tank for running water so he could attract and keep good experienced butchers. He charged them each a small amount. I agreed to furnish the gas and liability insurance which I insisted on him having anyway. In return I got the use of two bunks for single performers or musicians, if I needed them. It was a great asset. We kept good butchers and if the money showed we got it. A good concession department is very important to the financial success of a circus.

Frank and I were talking one day. He said, "Bobby, Kenny is making too much money." I said, "Frank I want you to explain something to me." He



asked what. I said, "How can a percentage man get too much money. The more he makes the more we have." He said, "You got me." I guess he remembered that Kenny broke in on the Ringling show as an usher when he and Walter were managers. Walter didn't think like that. He wanted everybody to make money.

Walter and Frank played the good guy, bad guy routine superbly. Frank was the bad guy; Walter was the good guy. Walter cared a lot more for the performance than Frank did. All the performers loved Walter. Frank was more of a bottom line person. He cut the spec out of the Beatty show the first year after Walter died. I was possibly one of the more butcher-friendly circus owners. Perhaps it was because I knew the strength of the concessions and it was the only department you didn't have to pay. If you had a bad day you didn't have to pay them, but had to pay everybody else their regular. Chinese was putting up the marquee and the side show banner line. However if you were running late or short of help, they would jump in and help put the show up. No grumbling or questions asked because if it doesn't get up, they can't make money and that was the name of the game for them as it was most certainly for me. That was the only earthly reason I had the show. After one of those days I knew what each one liked to drink. I would go in the butchers sleeper and put a bottle or six pack on their bunk to show my gratitude.

I could tell a lot of butcher stories but the ones about Six Pack Henry and Good Looking Eddie stand out. Henry always had a six pack of beer, so Six Pack Henry was his name. We are playing Galveston, Texas. Mayburn Miller lived in Houston and incidentally he had sold his three act of Helen, Ola and Katy to the Beatty show. My concession manager was away for a few days and he came down to help me and was checking the butchers in and out with items.

Six Pack was selling Cokes after having too many beers and Mayburn hadn't realized it. He was up in the reserved seats and had set down his tray to make change for a large bill.



The colorful paint job on the King ticket semi in 1963.

When he picked it up he bumped a lady with it. She scolded him, and they got in an argument. Six Pack invited her outside to fight, then resumed selling his Cokes. The lady was the mayor's wife. It was just after the show started, because one always went in with popcorn and peanuts first to dry them out and make them thirsty, after which we sent in cold drinks and sno cones. The first reserve seat ticket seller was still on his box. The mayor was mad as hell and asked him where the manager was. I was on the front door and he directed him to me. He was screaming. I took him away from the door out of ear shot of the late comers, settled him down and listened to his story. I apologized on behalf of myself and the circus and assured him I would fire the butcher immediately and furthermore I would send him down town to the bus station and insist he leave town. We had just picked him up a few towns back and again I was sorry and I knew he did not want me to leave him in Galveston. He seemed well satisfied as I escorted him back to his seat. I went and got Six Pack, and paraded him down the track in front of the mayor and out of the tent. I told Six Pack to go to the butcher's sleeper, you son of a bitch, and don't come out until Texas City, the next town. I went back in to check on the Mayor and his family, and take the children with some toys from the novelty stand.

As they were leaving after the show was over, he came to the office and now he is raving mad. I said, "What's the problem noble?" I had noticed his Shrine pin before but didn't say anything. He said the man

you fired is still behind the concession stand. I said that can't be and he said to come with him. On the way to the stand I'm thinking if he came out of the sleeper, I am going to kill the bastard. He points out Mayburn Miller who looked somewhat like Six Pack. Mayburn always wore a western hat but behind the stand he had his hat off. Neither had much hair, and sorta red faces and the same kind of glasses. I could see the faint resemblance. I asked the Mayor if he was a member of Elmina. I knew that was the name of the temple in Galveston. Huftle had tried to book it, but they had something that conflicted with the date we wanted, so he booked the Lions Club. He said yes I am, why? I said that's not the man, that's a friend of mine who is helping me out while my concession manger is away. He's a member of Arabia Temple in Houston. That's where he is from. I took him over and introduced them. Mayburn had a big Masonic ring on. I told Mayburn what it was about. He showed him his card and they shook hands. This time the Mayor apologized to me. Another circus day is coming to a close.

Good Looking Eddie. He wasn't good looking; in fact he was an ugly Polish guy. He thought he was handsome and every time he saw his reflection he would comb his hair; he couldn't pass up a mirror. So he was called Good Looking Eddie.

We were playing Ironton, Ohio for the Jaycees. I was standing by the bandstand during the night show talking to Roger Boyd. I saw a commotion in the back end blues, so I ran over to see what was happening. Good Looking Eddie had dumped a tray of sno cones over a man's head. They were grape. We changed colors a few times each show but always served just one color at a time. We never mixed the colors because that was too slow. The kids would stall trying to make up their minds. Eddie was a little wacky but he was a good, fast butcher. He had a system; he would make a pitch like a short side show opening, saying, "Everybody who can hear me I am going to tell you about these sno cones." He would then say the grapes, or whatever fla-



vor he was selling, were picked at a particular place and was sweetened with the finest refined sugar. He would tell them the price, tell them to have their money out and ready, hold up their hands and he would wait on them. He would not sell one until he finished his pitch. During his pitch a man kept bothering him, "I want one, I want one," while he pulled on Eddie's trouser leg. Eddie said, "Here, I'll give you all of them," and dumped 40 sno cones over his head. I couldn't believe my eyes when I got over there. It was comical. When the man collected himself he got up to whack Eddie. I said, "Run, Eddie, run." He started running up the long side toward the front door. (The long side is the side where seats are continuous. The short side is where the performers entrance and bandstand is with fewer seats.) The man starts running after Eddie. I jump in between them to slow him down, but he is gaining on Eddie. I stop the man, put both my hands on his shoulders, looked him square in the eyes and held him. It was so funny it was all I could do to keep from laughing out loud. He didn't have much hair and the purple ice was all over his head, in his ears, and all over his shirt. I had never seen anything like it. I told him he did not want to have a fight and embarrass himself in front of his friends and neighbors. I told him I would fire the butcher and pay his cleaning bill, and to sit down and enjoy the rest of the show. I thought I had him convinced to sit down but he broke away from me and starting running after Eddie. I got between them. I don't know what the people in the audience thought was going on. Eddie by now was going out the door. When we got to the front I told the Jaycees standing there we had a little problem; "I'm going to take care of it." They were all young guys of course and they were laughing at him. Eddie had thrown his tray on the concession counter and ran to the butchers' sleeper. Kenny did not know what had happened.

I took the man up in front of the counter. Kenny and his wife Rosa, who was Chinese, were standing there. I winked at Kenny and started beating on the counter. "One of your sales people spilled a tray of sno-



Circus goers lined up at the ticket wagon in 1963.

cones on this man and you must fire this man now. And you should be ashamed of yourself for having such people work for you and I might just fire you too." Rosa didn't see me wink at Kenny and she is saying "vee don't have to take this Kenny." He's saying, "Shut up Rose." I keep pounding on the counter and pointing my finger at them and said I might just fire all of you tonight. Rosa is getting louder, "Vee don't have to take this Kenny." He's getting louder telling her to shut up.

I put on a pretty good show. I lugged the man away from the stand over to where the Jaycees were and told the man I would give him the price of his admission ticket because he had missed part of the show. I also gave him \$15 for a new shirt and to clean his trousers. He said the trousers were from a new \$150 suit. I had looked at them and thought they were more like a \$35 J. C. Penny suit. Of course I didn't tell him that. The Jaycees knew him and they agreed with me and told him so. I made him sign a no-further-claim form. The Jaycees told me later don't worry about it. "That guy is on the big pills," whatever that meant. I did not play Ironton until many years later when I had the Cavalcade of Stars

Show under canvas. But I will never forget Ironton, Ohio.

The 1963 season is going well and I am hearing stories about how bad the California inspectors are and how strict the state is on vehicles. My duties are stacking up. I am now handling the bill posters besides the promoters and I have hired a separate press agent. Floyd is beginning to mess up the agents, sending them into the same town. They would call me. I would ask what was the next town he gave you. When they told me I told them go to that town, stay there and book that one. I called Floyd and told him to just lay out the route and wire it to me. I would give it to the agents. He had also had them working almost a week on a particular Saturday date. I called him and said we were taking that Saturday off and making a longer jump into a Sunday date for an afternoon and then two shows on Monday. He got real upset and was screaming, "You can't take off Saturday; that's never been done; Saturday is the best circus day there is; you have to show on Saturday. I told him that was probably right years ago but this is now. I was not tying up two agents, endless days and getting behind on the route. The King Bros Circus took that Saturday off.

I was then spending a lot of time on the phone, and going downtown every morning to see the officials. I was working like hell, with everything on the lot too. I called an old friend of mine who I had stayed in touch with through the years. He was on the first show I broke into the business on. I was 14; he was 59. He sort of took me under his wing and taught me a lot. He was my mentor in the carnival business. He was educated and from a good family. His father was a bridge builder. His name was C. S. Poole. He, like so many others I met in the carnival business, got into it during the depression and stayed. He later became a fixer on shows. He was now retired from the show business and a night clerk in a hotel in Meridian,



Mississippi. As a sideline he had a little town over in Alabama straightened out for vehicle licenses and was furnishing them to two large carnivals. I asked him if he wanted to go back on the road. I made him a deal. He had a nice little car, and he was to stay in hotels. He was an absolute gentleman. He said, "I will give them notice but I won't leave until they get a replacement."

I was very happy and I knew he was going to be very helpful in California. I had gotten a connection from Dub Duggan for California tags that he had gotten from Paul Miller when they were out there. My press agent was none other than Starr DeBelle who was my idol as a writer. He used to write very funny stories in the *Billboard* that I read religiously all my life. He wrote about the Windy Van Hooten Show, the One Horse and Up Circus, Drawhead Sisters Carnival, etc. and now to have him work for me was a real treat. That was not his real name. He did a great job and I could readily see the difference in the advance stories. He was getting us in the papers. He was a real pro and knew the newspaper business.

We always stayed 14 days ahead with the bill posters and press agents. He called me and said he saw we were going into California. I said, yes, we were going to play the last 7 days of this season and go all the way up the coast in 1964. He said, "I can't take my car into California because a few years back I had an accident and I'm hot. I will park my car and take a bus and finish up the season. I can't come next year. I'm sorry; contact me when you come out." I was the one who was sorry. I had gotten a taste of a real press agent.

When we got to California I found out what they meant about the inspectors. There were nine of them at each stand. Fire, health, safety, three city, three county, three state and each one superseded the other. You had all of them to satisfy each day and if you got some young punk who didn't know his ass from an apple about it and who was probably appointed by some politician, you had to satisfy him too.

My story to them was: This was our first time in the state. We were

from Florida and we were going to move out there and they would have 150 new citizens. Of course that was not true but they didn't know the difference (I thought that it might get back to the politicians.) If they found anything wrong please tell me so I could correct it by opening time next season. Most of them wanted it corrected now. One inspector might tell us to stake down all the quarter poles, which really was not the best thing to do in a bad wind, but we would stake them down that day. Each day was different. I never argued with them. My mother had told me years ago, you can catch more flies with sugar than you can with vinegar.



The King Bros. generator semi in 1964. Doug Lyon photo.

My first Saturday I found out they were not sincere about health, fire and safety. It was just a job and politics. We had everything like we had in the last town with fire extinguishers all out (and we had to buy a lot of them). It was almost doors and still no inspectors showed up, and then it was almost show time the sponsor is complaining. So I said open up. We were not supposed to seat anyone on the ground. Sunday, no inspectors. I said set them on the ground up to the ring curbs like we would in Georgia if you have to. From then on we did what ever we wanted to do within reason. We also had to borrow a concession trailer from some friends since the inspectors would not let you use ground joints. Mr. Poole was sure going to be a big help out here.

I had rented the fairgrounds at El Centro in the Imperial Valley to winter the show and build more seats. We enlarged the big top. I had an 80' round end with two 30's and a 40' middle piece. I sent the elephants

back to Florida to winter. I was not going to stay; I was going back to spend the holidays with my children. We loaded the three middles of the tent in front of the elephant truck so Leaf could put ten extra feet in each middle which would give me a tent 80' x 210' instead of 80' x 180'. We realized after the week in California we were going to need more seats, and I knew we were going to have to put in two and three day stands. I needed more promoters because a lot of the towns we were going to play were larger and would take longer to work. We were going to open a month earlier and December was not a good month for phone deals unless you were calling for a Christmas show

deal. I sent Kenny to Elkhart, Indiana to the Wells Cargo Trailer Company to design a concession trailer the way he wanted and bring it back to the coast. While in Florida I had a telephone installed in my car. The equipment took up a lot of space in my trunk but

it was worth it, no more hotel or motel rooms just to use the phone. You could not remove it from the car like you can now. If the phone rang and I was not in the car the horn would blow. I believe I was the first circus man to have one. McClosky got one the next year. They were not like cell phones today. It was push to talk, let up to listen. In California there were a lot of them and sometimes you had to wait to get airtime.

I had a big show in 1964. The Herrmanns did not come back. Jack Leontinni hired them for Tom Packs. I had a lot of horses anyway with the ones I hired on the west coast. I had Pietro Canestrilli and family who did three of their acts. His brother Orestes did head balancing traps, a dog and chimp act, plus was in my show-owned bareback act and rode one of my high school horses. I had hired Eddie Hendricks in Arizona where he lived. He had a wire act, a poodle act, rode in my bareback act and had bearman Emil Pallenburg's daughter who did a very good single trap that Eddie's wife Elaine had taught her. Elaine was a very fine



performer and was many years on the Ringling show before she retired. I hired some other west coast acts including Frank and Bernice Dean with the horses they had, and Barbara Fairchild's two horses that had been with the show since the first season 1961, I had plenty of horses.

Frank was a big asset to the show. He and Bernice did a standard whip act. He did a 50' whip trick on the track. He also did a western rope act. He had a long-line horse. Bernice had a rolo bola act that I used in an end ring with two other balancing acts. Barbara did a principal bareback act, worked my comedy horse, and rode menage for me. In the next-to-the-last act in the show we broke all the ring curbs in the front and brought them back to the center poles, giving us a nice wide track. We put prop hands at both ends so people would not walk down the track. Roger Boyd announced for everyone to stay in their seats for this next act. Frank actually did horses catches which was roping one and two horses charging down the track at break neck speed. Then Frank, Bernice and Barbara did trick riding up and down the track over and under, fender drags and the other tricks at a fast pace. It was fantastic. We put back the ring curbs in the center ring for the elephant act and that finished the show with a bang.

We opened in Chula Vista on Friday, March 13th, and we went through snow going over the mountain from El Centro. With DeBelle I had seen the power of a good press agent, so I hired Eddie Howe. His father had been a press agent for the Ringling show. Eddie had been working for the movie companies, going ahead of new films. He knew all of the newspapers and did a terrific job. He was both contracting press agent who placed the ads and a regular agent getting the stories in. He came up with the idea of the Beatle elephants (the Beatles were just getting hot then). We got some floor mops, tied them together, made wigs and put them on the elephants as head-pieces. We opened the act with them. The band played them in with Beatles music. They went around the ring doing a little dance. Then we

took off the wigs and they did their regular routine. We got a lot of publicity from it. I paid Eddie more money than I had ever paid a press agent before. Eddie was sharp, as you will find out later.

We went from Chula Vista to Oceanside for two days, then San Clemente, Tustin, Orange, Santa Ana for two days, Anaheim for two days, and on up the line. Floyd was beef-



The side show tent on the ground behind the two banner line semis. Doug Lyon photo.

ing, "Son, a circus is just supposed to play one day, get in and get out."

We were doing three shows almost every day and turning them away at most every performance. McClosky said some of the days I was doing better than he was with the Beatty show. We went right on up, packing them in. I had raised the prices on everything except the seventy five cent advance children's phone sale ticket.

We were way ahead on our booking. We had originally booked Burnaby, a suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia, for CKNW radio, which had an orphans' fund, for two days. I had sent Nick Procino, my best promoter, there. I had broken him in, in 1961. He had never sold circus tickets before, but he had sold some policemen's ball tickets and he was also a former encyclopedia salesman. They make the best promoters. He stayed with me until 1991 when he went into the jewelry business and later bought a restaurant in the Smokey Mountains. He kept ordering more tickets so I put it in for four days instead of two. He finally sold 20,000 advance children's tickets.

In California when you were stopped by the highway patrol they

didn't arrest you and make you pay right then. They gave you a ticket and you had so many days to pay it. If you didn't they would add a penalty but they still did not hassle you. They would wait until you renewed your tags and tack everything on. I had a stack of tickets an inch high, but I did not have time to stop and lose the truck for a day or two. I had two good mechanics and we carried

an extra motor that would fit all of the trucks except the elephant truck. It was an Inter-national; the rest were Chevys and GMCs and most everything was interchangeable, but it was all they could do to keep them patched up to get them over the road.

We were in Redding California on Monday, May 4th, which was our next to the last day in California before we went into Oregon at Medford. We had just opened the doors for the afternoon show. A man tapped me on the shoulder and said he wanted to see me for a minute. He showed me his badge. I put my chain across my gate on the front door and told Gannett, Roger's wife, she was on the other gate, that I would be back in a minute. We went behind the proscenium. He told me he was a Department of Transportation inspector. He had looked at some of my trucks and said that I had two choices. I could stay on the lot and give my consent, or tonight when I pulled off, he would attach them.

I said that I wanted to comply. I sent Mr. Poole downtown immediately to the newspaper and radio to buy ads at once saying that due to the tremendous demand for circus tickets, King Bros. Circus will play an additional day. We go on to Yreka, the last day in California, go to the fairgrounds, pay the rent and tell them and the press that due to circumstances beyond our control we would be unable to show there.

As luck would have it we did not have a sponsor there. We were just renting the lot and going to give them a percentage of the gate. They tried to sue us later for loss of antici-



pated revenue which of course you can't do, but you know how they think; get the showman if you can.

The inspector put stickers on the trucks that needed to be fixed and what needed to be done. I put trucks in every garage in town and told them I would pay overtime to get them fixed right away. My two mechanics were great and they went to work on the other ones. The main problem was the brakes. We had all vacuum brakes, except the elephant truck which had air. There was a kit you could get called air over vacuum but in small towns they were hard to find. I sent into the nearest big town to get as many as we could and other parts we needed.

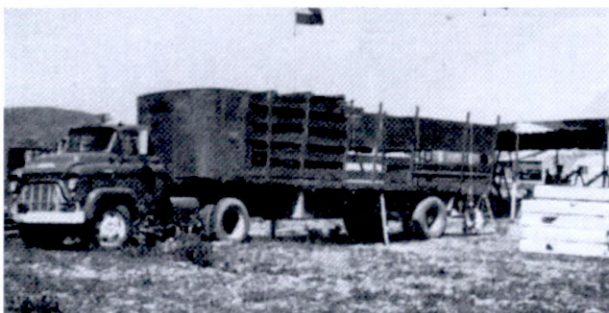
We had a big day's business the next day and it was a good thing we did. The night show was going on and I still had two trucks in the garage. I went down and they said they were not going to finish them

because they didn't have the parts. I said please stay there; I would be right back.

I went to see the inspector at his hotel. He was the same one who had tied up Dory Miller with the Kelly Miller Circus in 1960 when he made a short tour of the west coast. Dory was tied up for a complete week. The inspector was a nice man who just had a job to do. We had become sorta friends those two days and he was sensible. When I knocked on his door, he was in his pajamas; he had already gone to bed. I told him the story I used when I had to. That Colonel King had talked me into buying half of the circus and I had put all of my money I had, even what I had saved from my paper route when I was a kid. And the Colonel was in South America buying more animals that I was going to have to take care of, and I don't know what to do. My father was a Miller engineer (which he was) if I was his son what would he advise me to do? You know I have tried my best to fix them and fixing them up was not going to break me, but if I did not show those towns it would, because thousands of tickets were sold in advance. Not only would

I not make any money but I would have to refund the advance money out of my pocket and I couldn't afford it. The other man who lost a week did not have a promotion show (which he didn't).

He said to tell the garage that he had released the trucks. I said they wouldn't do that unless he came down with me. He put his suit on over his pajamas and in his house slippers I drove him to the garage. He tore off the plasters and wished me good luck and said please don't come back in his jurisdiction until I had better equipment. I paid the garage for what they had done and we pulled the tractors outside.



One of the two seat semis in 1964, Doug Lyon photo.

I had one more hurdle. I went to the state police barracks. I had been there and met the captain the first day to take them some tickets. I told him that the DOT man had released the trucks and would he not bother me. I was going out of state that night to Medford, Oregon. Neither he or the DOT inspector knew about my previous tickets. He said, "All right but tell me one thing. You said you came up from Chula Vista up the coast to here." I said, "Yes sir, around Los Angeles up and around San Francisco to here." He asked how in the world did I get all of that crap through all those check points and scales without getting inspected. I said, "Sir, it's the way I came from southern California to here." He wished me good luck.

What I didn't tell him was that many nights we went fifty or sixty miles out of our way to get around the scales and check points. We always had the 24 hour man arrow us around them everywhere we showed.

We did good business in

Washington and Oregon and we were now going into the big four day spot at Vancouver. We were going to show at Brentwood Shopping Center in Burnaby. The shopping center had an asphalt parking lot. I had to buy 10 dump truck loads of dirt to put down so the horses could run. The radio station, our sponsor, was doing a great job publicizing the show; it was their first circus. I rented white dinner jackets and tuxedos for everyone on the front door and the reserve seat ticket sellers, and a gown for Gannett, Roger's wife. Dinner jackets in the afternoon and tuxedos at night made a very good impression.

Our contract stated that the sponsor must settle up with the circus in cash on all advance sale tickets by 11:00 am at the show office, or the circus would not honor any tickets until the settlement was made. The sponsor was to receive its share of the gate each night.

I purposely had a small office to settle up with the sponsors because the more of them in there the slower the settlement was. About five of them came out in their CKNW jackets, but only three could squeeze in. The others stood on the steps looking in. I already knew how much I had coming from the promotion because the promoters send a copy of the reports. I did not know how many adult tickets they had sold. They showed me their figures. I said, "Gentlemen, these figures are wrong." They loudly protested. I said, "Gentlemen, they are incorrect." They screamed that they were correct; "we have an auditing department down at the station. We don't need a circus man to tell us we are wrong." After that remark I started to let it go but I said to myself they would catch it later on, I might as well clear it up now. I said, "What I'm trying to tell you here is your mistake; you are trying to give me three hundred dollars too much." Their faces fell and for the rest of the engagement they thought I was the greatest guy who ever wore shoes, and remarked to others how great I was. I really knew what they thought of showmen, but I took it in stride. I made a lot of money there.

After Vancouver we played Haney, Cloverdale, Hope, Princeton and



Osoyoos which was our last day in Canada, all to good business. Our first date in the states was June 11 at Omak, Washington. We now started our trek back east to finally close on the east coast at Savannah, Georgia on October 16 and 17.

Too many things happened on the way back to mention here but a few stick out in my mind. We were playing Pierre, South Dakota on Monday, August, 3. During the afternoon performance I learned the camel working in the end ring was staggering like he was going to fall down. It was a three ring display, big and little in one ring, ponies in one ring, and the camel and pony in the other. I ran back. Eddie Hendricks was working the act. I said, "Eddie you stay with the pony and I will take the camel out." I tied it to the stake line and told someone to go to my car and call a vet. I looked at the camel and he was eating grass. I shouted, "Don't call the vet, sick animals don't eat." Eddie finished and came out grinning. He had given the camel whiskey and the animal was drunk. I wanted to kill him.

I imagine you are thinking why don't you fire these people. Sure, I could fire them, but if I fire everybody who did something goofy I would have been there mostly by myself with hardly any show and couldn't move it.

I had a performer who used fire torches in his act. Just before he went in for his act he got into an argument with a prop hand standing by the bandstand. He picked up an unlighted torch and hit the prop guy over the head. A policeman in the audience arrested him and took him to jail then and there. That was in New York state. A friend of mine was visiting that day and later that season his brother told me to put on the same show I did for my buddy.

I went down that night and got him out. He and his family did three acts in the big show and also worked in the side show. They were with me the five years I had the King show and worked indoor dates for me after that. Show business is a great business if you can stand it.

Moving east we had a lot of problems with the trucks. Ed Murphy was bringing me tractors two at a

time. At that time he worked for Mr. Bundy, who owned Modern Motors and still sells to showmen, mostly carnivals. Sometimes they were not worth repairing. We were starting to have trouble with the International that came with the elephants. The truck was great because you could get parts for it almost anywhere because most all International farm tractor parts were interchangeable. They were more expensive; for example, generators or starters were around \$125.00 while Chevys were approximately \$30.00. But almost every town had a farm tractor dealer.

Eventually, I bought a new tractor from Bundy to replace the International, but we did not hook it up to the elephant trailer immediately. I sold the International to a junk yard. It was still running alright but I sold it for \$75.00.



The King ticket semi on opening day in 1965. Joe Bradbury photo.

That night when we started to hook the new truck up to the elephant truck the fifth wheel would not fit. The junkyard was closed. I got the policeman I had met that morning to call the junk yard man to tell him we wanted to take the fifth wheel off the truck we had sold him and give him the one we had. Would he come down and open up? My mechanic and I went down to the junkyard. He made the exchange which took quite a while. The man charged me \$75.00 for the fifth wheel from the truck I sold him for \$75.00. So I essentially gave him the International. You can say a good business man would not do that, but it was midnight and we had to go.

Eddie Howe was still doing a good job. We stayed 14 days ahead with the press so I knew when he was going to be in Lincoln, Nebraska. We were going to play it two days and I wanted to get in touch with him to tell him to increase the ads for that

spot.

I called the newspaper, told them who I was and would they please tell Mr. Howe to call me when he arrived. They said he was not coming in person but he was sending the ads and stories and passes for us special delivery and everything was OK; they are running everything he sent. I thanked them and said be sure and send a photographer out to see the tent go up. They said they would try to.

I called Western Union where I was supposed to send his money. We sent all of the front end money in care of Western Union will call. They said he had called and said he was expecting money and for us to send it, less the charges, in care of Western Union in a town in Washington. I called several towns back and he had done the same thing for weeks. I called every hotel in the town he was having the money transferred to until I got him. I said it's all out and over, don't bother to send anymore ads. You are fired.

I told you earlier he was smart but he outsmarted himself out of a good job. I never saw Eddie again, but I was happy I caught him. I never hired another press agent. I said if he can do it that way, so can I. I had just found myself another job.

After Lincoln we played Fremont then made a long jump to Yankton, South Dakota. I had just gotten on the lot, went back to my trailer and was just falling asleep. There was a knock on my door to tell me that the cook house truck and the combination workingman's sleeper and spool truck had run into each other in Norfolk, Nebraska, about sixty miles back. One driver was in the hospital and the other in jail. I unhooked my car and back I go. It's a perfectly level road back to Norfolk, and I'm thinking how can this be. I go to the jail to find the driver of the spool truck. He had run into the back of the cookhouse. I asked when court would be in the morning, who the judge was and where he lived. They told me, but said they wouldn't wake him up if they were me. I said no, I



would not think of it. I went out to his house, and sat in my car in front of it until morning. When I saw the lights go on I gave him time to go to the bathroom. I walked up, knocked on the door, and told him my Col.

King story, paper route money and all, and asked if he could see his way clear to put us first on the docket. He said he would be right down, court was 9:00 am.

I went to the hospital to see about Joe the cook. He had bumped his head and shoulder when the spool truck hit him. He's gay and high strung and is yelling in his falsetto voice, "I'm going to get that son of a bitch, Blackie, he ran right into me." I said, "Joe when we get to court if you say anything except, 'yes sir' and 'no sir' I am going to put you in the hospital for a long time." I pay his hospital bill and take him with me. They bring Blackie in the court room. I am looking at Joe with daggers in my eyes and Joe said nothing. The judge gave Blackie a very light fine and said to me, "Mr. Snowden as soon as the owner of the other truck gets here you are free to leave." I said, "Your honor I own the other truck." He said, "Son, you do have trouble, good luck and be careful."

I had a great band. Isla had married Harry Shell who was a fine circus trumpet player and I had gotten Archie Chan from the Union Hall in Savannah, Georgia the year before. His father owned a laundry there. His brother Ty was a good drummer. Archie started in the circus business with me and went on to the Hoxie and Beatty shows and then Ringling show for many years. He also ran the concession stand for Irvin Feld's Siegfried and Roy magic show when it was at the Frontier Casino in Vegas.

Near the end of the season we were ahead on the route. I directed Huftle to go into Florida and book a stage show which would have magic circus acts and a live band. I told him to take his time, get good sponsors, and book seven days. Don Ameche at that time had a weekly television show called International Showtime. I told Huftle to call our show International Cavalcade of Stars, a title I used many years both in buildings and



The Cavalcade of Stars marquee and big top.

under canvas. I ordered posters and date sheets from Enquirer Printing Co., the same people who were doing the circus paper. I sent in the promoters and it was a huge success.

I used Charley Roark's illusions. He worked in the big show, plus he did other magic, his vent act and Punch and Judy. I had the side show sword swallower who also did a strait jacket escape. I also hired the Dubsky family after the Beatty show closed. There were six of them. They did three perch acts. I lined them up across the stage. The Royal Hungarian act was a Risley and teeterboard act. We had our regular band, Isla, Harry and Archie. We also had a magic bag pitch. It was a great show.

Stuart Miller, Bill English's side show manager, visited and the next winter Bill took out one. Floyd handled the booking and promoters and named Stu Professor Miller, a name he used for many years after he had his own show.

Other showmen came. They saw. They copied. Soon there were numerous stage shows with magic and acts under telephone promotion, but I was the first to have the idea.

Recently I called Stan Kramien to congratulate him on an article he had written about the old Cole show for *Circus Report*. Being the pro he is, he portrayed gift accurately. He had worked a couple of towns for me in 1964 and we had become friends, but

The King elephant, lead stock and sleeper in 1965. Joe Bradbury photo.



we had not spoken to each other since. He said, "Bob do you know you made me a million dollars. We were in your trailer one day having a drink and you said, 'Stan, I don't need these ele-

phants and all this crap. All I need is a magician, some acts and with phone promotion make just as much money.' I did it and I thank you."

The Cavalcade of Stars was a big success. The show's accountant Joe Mercurio was also my personal accountant. He said, "You did all right with the stage show didn't you." I said, "Did I?" He said I did but it put me in a higher tax bracket; "It's going to cost you in taxes."

I thought very hard on whether to sell my end of the King show and take out a stage show in 1965. In 1964, we grossed a tremendous amount of money, but by the time we got back east with all of the equipment we had to replace we didn't do any better than we did the year before.

In hindsight I should have unloaded all of the trucks and driven them into the Pacific Ocean, bought new ones, and never left the west coast. There were enough towns to play year round.

I talked to Frank about him and Bonnie buying me out, that I wanted to take out the stage show. He said, "You know we made a lot of money and where are we going to get another you." He also knew that the front end would probably go with me. But I had brought most of them with me anyway.

I did not want to let him down so I agreed to stay. That spring I married Lucy Derizkie, my wife and partner now for forty-one years. She did a very fine semi-slack wire. She started with a tight wire routine and then while she was on the wire they would slack the wire off with a turnbuckle and finish with the whip and turn around on the wire. She was one of only two women to accomplish this, she and Flor De Linea. She also worked elephants.

Almost everybody stayed from the 1964 tour. I kept





Frank and Bernice Dean, and the Cannestrils, but we cut the show-owned riding act, and the trick riding. But we still had plenty of horses with Dean's. I hired the Joanedis family who had the golden kids unicycle act and the oldest daughter finished with cups and saucers atop the high unicycle. Johnny did a good juggling slack wire, and the "Great Crazy Greek" plate spinning act. Of all the plate spinners nobody sold the act better than Johnny the Greek. He stayed with me a couple of years later on the stage show. We had another three ring display of wire acts. Roger Boyd Jr. had learned wire. Violetta, my elephant man's wife, did wire and Manuel Hernandez also did two other acts in the show. My wife and Johnny the Greek worked alone since their acts were completely different. We had the same band, Archie, Isla and Harry. Charley Roark again had illusions in the big show and Roger Boyd and his family managed the side show.

Actually, just about everyone who had been with me from the inception stayed. McClosky called and asked if I would use Mickey King who was Frank's good friend from the old Ringling show days when she had been a featured performer for many years. She was up in her 60s, but she

Bob Snowden and a group of his King Bros. Circus employees.

still looked good in the air. She would roll up and down the web to a hand loop, then do one arm swings. Roger would have the audience count the revolutions with him, which sometimes was mind boggling. She would roll down the web and style, and Roger would announce the "Great Mickey King 62 years young." It was a great crowd pleaser.

Many people thought Frank McClosky was not a nice person because of his sometimes-gruff personality. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Frank had a good heart and he never forgot his friends. I only had to turn him down one time. When I was going to open on the coast in 1964 he called and said he would like me to hire Davisio Cristiani with his horse. He said of all the Cristranis he liked Davisio best, and that he needed a job. I said, "Frank I couldn't use Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, I have all of the horses I can use." When I told him what I had he agreed.

We open the season to good business with several three show days. Roger told me he was having a bit of a problem with Mickey King. She

was becoming a Prima Donna. I couldn't have anyone disrupting the organization, regardless of Frank or anyone. I said I'd take care of it. Roger and I played the good guy, bad guy game pretty good when we had to. We didn't have to do it too often.

I went to the backyard to see Mickey. I knocked on Mickey's door and said, "Mickey I want you to take a walk with me." I put my arm around her and we started walking up toward the front end. As we walked I told her how I liked her act and that it was an asset to the performance and that she went way back with Frank. I pointed to my trailer and very calmly and sincerely said, "Do you see that trailer, that's where I live and I am the only star on this show. I pay everybody every week and get all of this crap over the road." She said she understood, and I never had any more trouble with Mickey. I never mentioned it to McClosky.

Frank now had a phone in his car and we could contact each other easily. He called and said not to send Floyd's wife any more money until he told me to. He said he was having a problem. Floyd was shaking down the Beatty promoters by charging them for their assignments and Frank wanted to teach him a lesson.



I laughed and said it again: "Well, well."

It really wasn't any business of mine. All Floyd was doing for me was laying out the route. But Frank was my partner in the King show, so I went along with it. The problem with charging the promoters was they handled our money first so they would just steal from our end of the promotion to cover their kick backs to Floyd. Floyd oversaw them and he would not say anything about it.

I was sending his wife Vicky money each week. After the first week went by, Floyd called and said, "Son, have you sent Vicky her money yet? She says she hasn't received it." I said, "No, Floyd I have been busy." I alibied and said I'd get around to it soon. Another week passed and he called again, "have you sent Mrs. King the money?" I alibied again and said I would do it right away. Third week he called and said, "Son, send that broad the money; she is driving me crazy." He had gone from Vicky to Mrs. King and now that broad. I told Frank, who laughed and said, "I think I have him straightened out; send the old bastard's wife the money." I found out later from some of the promoters that instead of them sending money for each town he would sell *Amusement Business* magazine to them for ten or fifteen dollars a week. You have heard of the unsinkable Molly Brown. He was the unstoppable Floyd King.

We had several three show days. After one of them, the next town was Brockton, Massachusetts. We did four consecutive shows, the most we had ever done in one day and it was the largest day's business we ever had. After the third show I went to Mickey and told her she didn't have to do the last show. She said, "No, I am going to work like everyone else." Her act was very strenuous but she was a good trooper from the old school. Everybody worked all four shows and didn't cut a trick.

About a week later as we started putting the show up, a man came out and informed us that he owned the lot and he had not given permission for a circus to use it. It seemed that the Jaycees had not cleared it with him, although we had sent the sponsor a copy of their responsibilities. I

told him that we had nothing to do with securing the lot; it was the sponsor's obligation. He was rather hostile so I told him I would get them out there right away.

A King Bros. Circus newspaper ad used for the opening of the 1965 season.

I called and told them what had happened and if we didn't do something there was going to be a lot of disappointed kids. They came out; one thought the other had taken care of it. They got into an argument with the owner and he ordered us off his property. I told the sponsor to get all of the members to call everyone they knew to try to locate a lot, that the clock was ticking.

I had only lost two days as long as I had the show. The first one was in 1961 when Floyd was handling the promoters and had forgotten to send anyone to work a town. It was an old cotton field. It had rained the day before and every time we tried to pull the tent up it would fall. It was a push pole top and you had to pull the poles up with the canvas attached. We tried and tried but we couldn't get it up. We didn't have a promotion so I didn't have to kick any money back. The other was the day after our DOT episode which was a lot and license contract.

Here we had a big advance promotion. I did not want to break my record. The Jaycees came back to tell us they had found a lot; we had already loaded up. They told us where to go. When we got there the lot was too small and impossible to use.

One of the Jaycees said they had found an alternative, I said to take

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me over to see it before we moved. I went with them; it was ok so we move over. I told them we would give two shows, but the first one would be late. We could not make it by 2:00 pm. We settled up on the advance sale. I wanted to get the money in my pocket. I told them to have some signs made and put them on the original lot to direct the audience to the new one.

Everyone on the show, performers and all pitched in and we got the show up. The first performance started at 4:00 pm instead of 2:00 pm. There were some disgruntled people so I didn't charge for reserve seats. It was first come, first served. That took some of the heat off. We still had a nice day's business.

That night after the show was all down, Rocky, my elephant man who had been with me several years, had more drinks than usual and I think his wife had agitated him about us switching lots three times that day. Everyone was tired. He was complaining about the day and said, "If you didn't need me so bad I'd screw [leave]." I was in no mood for ultimatums and my diplomacy was at a low ebb. I had never yielded to a threat before and I was not about to start now. I said, "Mr. Maley, pay him off."

I had a back-up driver for the truck, my wife could work the act in the big show, and I could work the elephants on the lot until I could get somebody. We had a bull hand to feed and water the elephants, but he could not work them to put up the top or pull the stakes. He was sort of a goofy kid, but he would do what you told him.

I called McClosky to tell him to send me a bull hand who could work



the bull on the lot, that we had everything else covered. He was not on the show. He was fishing but he would take care of it. Frank had been getting away from the show more and more after Walter died. Before Kernan's death one of them stayed on the show all the time.

The next day the show was down. I was standing by the office talking to Arnold. A little sports car came driving up to the office with its top down and a boy and girl asked if we had an elephant get away? I looked over to the bull truck and Mary was gone. I thought of Norma. I said no not again.

I grabbed a bull hook and jumped in their car and asked them to show me where she was. They said, "It's not far; we saw her crossing the road; it was a four lane road with a median in the middle." She was on the wrong side of the road, couldn't be on the side where the lot was so I could just walk her down the side of the road. She was just walking slowly down the road. How she got across the road without getting hit I don't know. Anyone who knows anything about elephants will verify they are incredible animals. I have seen them do some unbelievable things.

I had them let me out just ahead of her and I called out to her. I think she was glad to see me. It seemed she was a little nervous, so I turned her around and started walking her back, trying to pick an opening in the traffic to take her across the median. We finally got to the center, then a police car came, saw my predicament, and stopped traffic so we could get across. Now cars are slowing down. They don't believe their eyes. A man in a suit and tie walking down the road with an elephant in the middle of the night isn't something you see every day.

I'm walking down the road and thinking that one of my partners is probably laying by her pool in Florida, and the other one is fishing. I must be crazy; I have had it. I didn't want to go out in 1965, and I decided that in the spring of 1966 it was going to be the magic show, regardless.

I got back to the lot, loaded the elephants, started to the next town and



Frank McClosky, co-owner of King Bros. Circus.

told my wife as soon as the season was over, no more King Bros. It was going to be International Cavalcade of Stars.

The closing date was Ocala, Florida. A lot of people visited including Frank and Floyd. To mention again how small our circus world is, that was the last day my wife ever did her wire act, and the first time she ever did it in a tent was when her family joined Floyd's King Bros. Circus the spring of 1947 in Jackson, Mississippi. Floyd saw her act the first time she did it in a tent and he saw it the last time also. Kernan and McClosky called Floyd Phineas T King.

Floyd died in 1976 at 88 years old. God bless him and he needs it.

I had not told anyone about selling out. After all of the shows closed Bonnie Kernan sold her one third of the Beatty show, Sells and Gray and King Bros. to Art Concello.

I can truthfully say I was partners with Art Concello but we never made a nickel together because I sold him my part of the King show before the next season opened. I told Art and Frank that I was going to sell out. I had all of those tickets still from California and it was going to take considerable money to square them. I was glad Bonnie had sold out because I didn't feel like I had let Walter's wife down by me selling out.

We negotiated an amicable deal and we parted good friends. I had told Frank many years ago about my

experience on the Arthur Bros. Circus when it was being small-poxed. He laughed and said, "That was us, Walter, Frank and Art, we wanted to buy it." And now you know the rest of that story.

I now had to call my people and tell them we were breaking up our family, and that's what it was. Pietro Canestrelli and his family had been with me a long time, but I couldn't use them on the stage show, the same with the Greek's family. But they did work indoor circus dates for me latter on. Oreste stayed several years with his chimp and dogs. Frank and Bernie Dean went back to the coast. There was nothing for Roger Boyd and his family to do on the stage show or they would have been with me. I can't say enough good things about them. They were truly family. I don't know how I would have got along without them. They stayed one more year with the King show when Jimmy Cole managed it and Gannett handled the office. If I had known she could do that, she would have been in the office for me years ago.

After that they went to the Beatty show for many years, Roger did the announcing, Gannett did the downtown morning ticket sale and later Roger Jr. managed the side show.

Kenny McConnell, my concession manager, went to the Beatty show, and later went in business for himself with a concession trailer playing fairs until he died. Tommy Huftle stayed with me until he died. Many of my promoters stayed many years. Harry and Isla Shell were with us until Isla died. Archie Chan worked for us many times later. "Wacky Mac," our cook at the time; "Pete the Tramp," the circus boss canvas man; and Ralph Garcia, who was a butcher, worked on and off for us in various positions until they died. Charley Roark went with me and stayed with me a total of twenty five consecutive years until he retired to his home in Malvern, Arkansas. He was with me and for me all those years. He too was not an employee. He is family.

Now you know the truth about how the Duke of Paducah Circus started and became King Bros. I hope you had as much fun reading it as I did reliving it.



# LOOKING FOR BABE

For Patsy Bea,

## Performer, Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus (1932-1934)

Today is our mother's 76th birthday. She sits beside our father, a copy of *Bandwagon*, the journal published by the Circus Historical Society, spread out in front of them on the dining room table. My sister, Wendy, has set a bottle of champagne in an ice bucket in the center of the table. My brothers and Wendy's husband and my husband stand on one end of the table, sipping Bud Lights. My children and my nieces and nephews huddle near the opposite corner of the table. I hand everyone a champagne glass. Wendy pops open the champagne bottle and pours some in each glass. She looks at my brothers and me. "To Babe," she says. We all reach toward our mother and clink our glasses against hers. "To Babe," our mother whispers. "Babe."

Our mother, known as Patsy Bea in the circus world, was an only child whose father died when she was nine months old. She and her mother lived with her maternal grandparents, Beatrice and Ernest Harrington, who owned and managed Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus in the early thirties. I don't remember when or in what context my siblings and I first learned this. We just seemed always to know it. Throughout our childhood, references to the circus just came out of nowhere. For example, if we claimed we were too sick to go to school, our mother would say, "What do you mean too sick?" She'd tell us that if she tried to tell her mother she was too sick to work, her mother would glare down at her and say, "I'm sorry you're sick. I'm sorry you don't feel good, Patsy Bea. But the elephant's not sick. You'll be fine, hun. Now let's get your costume on and get you ready for work." If we complained about household chores, school work, or after-school jobs, our mother

would say, "Yes, dear, I understand. I've been working since I was two. I rode in an elephant's mouth. In the circus." She'd pause, look us in the eye, nod, and add, "Your great-grandfather's circus. Yep, I was raised on a circus."

"On a circus," we once asked, or *in* a circus."

"The circus," she answered, "Harrington's Nickle Plate." She glared down at me and raised her eyebrows. "Don't get smart. Respect your great-grandfather."

"Did she ride on an elephant's mouth or in an elephant's mouth?" one of us whispered.

"No, don't say it," someone answered. "That's just asking to get sent to our room."

"Mother smiled at us. 'Are you kids telling secrets again? I'm dead serious,' she said. 'Be proud of your heritage.' She looked at us. 'Harrington Andrews Champion.' She pointed at each of us and said our names out loud. She winked at us. She reached in the icebox and got out a carton of eggs. 'Now can one of you please get the stool and see if there's any corn bread mix in the top cupboard? I'm trying to start dinner.' She looked at one of my brothers. 'Can you help me find my small mixing bowl?'"

Whenever our mother spoke about her circus act with the elephant, we imagined her body sandwiched between an elephant's jaws. We envisioned her legs dangling from one end of the elephant's mouth, her shoulders and head tilted backward from the other end, and her arms flying upward in an awkward attempt to wave at the audience, like something out of the movie *King Kong*.

When we were older, we began to suspect that our mother had miscommunicated and that she had rode neither in an elephant's mouth nor on

its trunk. Most likely, she rode atop its back. Later in life, we began to share a different image of our mother's circus act. The image still makes us smile. We imagine our mother in the circus ring, where she shares the spotlight with her favorite elephant, Babe. There's a picture of Mom dressed in a pastel pink tutu posing like a ballerina. She couldn't have been more than two or three when the picture was taken. In our imagination, our mother is dressed in that tutu, riding atop Babe's back. She holds her arms up high and waves both hands. She smiles at the people who have spent money, depression money no less, to buy a ticket to see her grandfather's show. We imagine her smiling a performer's smile, one that makes you think she's smiling just for you.

But as children, we were certain our mother had literally sat inside an elephant's mouth. We were just relieved she hadn't been swallowed, like Jonah. More than once, we tried to peep at her bare stomach to inspect for teeth marks, and we once asked is she had scars from elephant bites.

"Bites?" she questioned. "Oh, no, honey. Not at all. Babe was the most gentle creature in the world. She would never have bitten me. We were friends. She would patiently let me lie there and parade around the ring. When I stood next to her, she would slowly raise one leg, look at me to make sure she was out of the way so she wouldn't step on me, then slowly put her foot back down. Then she'd do the same with the other leg. She was an amazing elephant. She was more a person, really. I told her secrets." Many times she told us that Babe was the closest thing to a sibling she had. Sometimes, when she would tell stories about Babe, her eyes







would water. She would stare down at the floor, twist her hair, and say, "I miss Babe. I wonder what ever happened to her. Maybe I'll find her someday."

When we were children, our mother was always looking for something. Sometimes, we'd help her search. "Have you seen my wooden spoon? The TV guide is missing again. Where did I put my car keys?" We'd scramble around the house, rumble through drawers, peep under couch cushions, and peer into closets to help her find what she was looking for.

One time Mom asked our father to help her find a bag of canned tomatoes she'd stashed away, and he began looking in the usual places she stored food. He knelt beside the bed to peer underneath and look more carefully. "As God as my witness, I'll never go hungry, again," I joked. Our father crawled from underneath the bed and looked up at me. "I hope your mother didn't hear that," he whispered. He glared at me again. "You're just asking to get sent to your room," he said. We laughed.

"I heard that," Mom said from the kitchen.

Our dad walked in the kitchen, carrying a plastic bag full of canned tomatoes. "Honey, I found the tomatoes." He handed the bag to my mother.

"Oh, good," she said. "Thank you."

Mom pulled a can from the sack. The top was rusted, and there was a price tag stuck on the top. It said 10/\$1.00. Knowing that canned tomatoes were more than twice that price, I deduced that she'd had the tomatoes for quite awhile. I looked at the rusted top.

"Nothing a dab with a paper towel and water won't fix," she said. "These tomatoes are perfectly good."

"I agree," I said. "No sense in wasting good food."

"Well, I'll be prepared during the next depression. Must I remind you I spent much of my childhood in a car. Yep, I lived in a car. Ate cold oatmeal with water. For breakfast, lunch and dinner. Or syrup sandwiches. Always a little something sweet to eat. My grandfather made sure of that. When food was really scarce, he always managed to sneak me a little extra."

She opened the cupboard. "Now I

need a can of corn." She turned around, took a sip of coffee, and said, "Yes, but you already know. Your great-grandfather was kind. Quite the businessman. And a gentleman to boot. Of course, the animals got fed first. He always took care of his circus animals. And you know, you can tell a lot about people by the way they treat animals." She took the other cans of tomatoes from the bag and put them on the counter. "I remember Homer and I feeding the animals. It was a daily routine. The highlight of my day. God bless Homer. He always let me sneak Babe a little extra. Homer had a way of making me think Babe was my sister. We would pet her and talk to her. Before she performed, I always whispered 'break a leg' to her. And she whispered it back to me."

Our mother often told us stories about Homer, an African-American man who worked for Harrington's Nickle Plate. Her grandfather was somewhat overly protective of our mother, but he trusted her with Homer. Only with Homer. And Homer made the chores fun. It never occurred to Mom that bathing and feeding the elephants was work. When Homer and Mom bathed the elephants, Homer would spray their hides and encourage the elephants to dip their trunks in the water buckets and spray Mom. When the elephants sprayed her, Mom would wave her arms up and down, dance in circles, and giggle. "Uh, oh," Homer would tease. He'd look at the elephants and say, "Look what you've done. Gone and got Patsy Bea wet." He'd look at our mother and smile. "What's your grandfather going to say now?" He'd wink at our mother then say, "Better dry you off. And, remember, we don't have to tell your grandfather everything."

Our mother also searched for more important yet still tangible things. One December, she was decorating the house for Christmas. She stored her Christmas decorations in a big storage shed built near the back of our property. She unpacked the boxes and set them all over the living room floor. "The nativity scene is missing. Oh, no," she said. She paced the living room floor. "We need to find the nativity scene." The nativity scene was a small ceramic set. Each piece

was white, sprinkled with little glitters. Each of the children had painted one of the pieces of the nativity scene years earlier. We scanned the decorations on the floor. We looked inside every box. We took small boxes out of larger boxes. We unwrapped every item in each container. We brought in unmarked boxes from the storage shed. The nativity scene never showed up. "Christmas is ruined," Mom whispered.

We didn't offer to make Mom another nativity scene set. Even as children, we understood that some things couldn't be replaced. We simply patted our mother on the shoulder and said, "It'll be all right. Everything's going to be okay."

And then there were the less material things for which our mother searched. One summer Girl, the dog we'd had most of our youth, went missing. We circled the block and whistled and called. We hung up signs and made phone calls. We knocked on neighborhood doors and asked our friends to help us. More than once, Mom got a phone call from someone thinking they'd seen Girl roaming the streets. Mom loaded all of the kids in the car and drove to the spot the caller mentioned. We'd ride around and around. But we never saw Girl. Even when we moved from the city to a country home, our mother would stand on the porch and quietly call, "Girl, Girl. Come on, Girl. Come home. Here, Girl, here, Girl."

Sometimes, we'd stand beside her on the porch. "Come on, Girl. Here, Girl. Come home, Girl. Girl, Girl," we hollered. We'd walk down the porch steps and roam around the front lawn. "Girl, Girl, our mother needs you," we'd whisper.

As we became older and began to have children of our own, we realized that although our mother was constantly looking for something, she wouldn't know what it was until she found it. Our mother had survived two house fires in which she lost almost all her material goods, her mother and her grandparents had died, and she was the only family member left who'd known circus life. She once explained that being an only child was lonely. "No one to share with," she said. "No one to tell secrets to." She looked at the ceiling. She had lost her heritage, and we



couldn't imagine how she'd ever get it back.

Then one day, a couple of weeks before Mom's birthday, Wendy walked in our parents' house. Our parents were sitting at the dining room table. Mom asked Wendy if she wanted something to eat. They all chit-chatted for a few minutes. And then, out of nowhere, Wendy revealed a manila envelope, from which she pulled an issue of *Bandwagon*.

Mother didn't think much of it at first. Wendy stood over Mom, thumbed through the magazine, and pointed to an article written about her grandfather and the Nickle Plate Circus. Our parents were surprised and sat for awhile in awe. It seemed as if they were trying to get their bearings. Our mother began to read the article very slowly. She handed the magazine to our father, and he read a few passages. Mom and Dad passed the magazine back and forth, pointing at pictures, reciting passages, and stopping to listen to Mom explain the jargon used in the article. Mom read the part that described how well her grandfather treated his circus animals. "See, just like I always told you kids," she said. Dad repeated passages that referred to the Nickle Plate Circus as a top-notch show and revealed our great-grandfather as a businessman with integrity and compassion. Mom read a paragraph that explained ways her grandmother and mother helped with the circus. "And this was way before women's lib," she said. "Unbelievable. Absolutely amazing the line of women you come from," she told Wendy.

After reading each paragraph of the essay, Mom would pause to describe her memories of her grandfather. She recalled how her grandfather would twirl her in the air, how he gently lifted her atop Babe's back, and how he held her hand when they took long walks. And the three of them sat there a long time. Late into the night. And when Wendy got up and returned to the table with cups full of coffee, our mother was weeping. She looked at Wendy and tried to say something. She mumbled something, but Wendy couldn't understand her. Our father slid the magazine toward himself and read out loud a passage the article's author

quoted from an article written in 1933: "Mr. Harrington's pet hobby is his little granddaughter Patsy Bea. She is now two years old and rides her own pony in the concert. She has a real Wild West outfit and . . . is the youngest performer in the circus world today."

"See," Mom said. "I told you I've been working since I was two."

"Yes," Wendy said. "And look, it says here that you were training for contortion and bareback riding acts."

"I know," Mom said. She paused. She looked up at Wendy. Wendy set the coffee cups on the table. "Thank you," our mother said. She looked back down at the magazine. She took a sip of coffee. "Thank you."

Wendy told all of us about Mom's reaction to the magazine article. She said that she had ordered copies of the magazine to give Mom as a birthday gift, but once she read it, she couldn't wait until her birthday to give it to her. Wendy read passages of the magazine on the phone to us.

"It's like she got something she's needed her whole life," I said.

"The story confirmed Mom's memories of her grandfather. And, of course, of the circus," one of our brothers said.

"She's finally found Babe," Wendy said.

And here we stand, my siblings and me and our spouses and children, gathered around the kitchen table, celebrating Mom's birthday. Wendy puts the champagne glasses on the kitchen counter. Our mother slowly turns the pages in the magazine, reading quotes out loud about our great-grandfather. She shares her heritage with us. She tells us her secrets. But most of all, she smiles.

"Say, Mom," one of my brothers asks. "Did you ride on an elephant's mouth or in an elephant's mouth?" Our mother cuts her eyes at us.

"That's just asking to get sent to your room," I say.

Our father holds up the magazine and points to a picture that depicts an elephant being unloaded from a truck. He points to the elephant's mouth. "Right there," he says. "That's where she rode. Patsy Bea. Patsy Bea Harrington Andrews."

Our mother looks at our father. She looks at him for a long time. She reaches up and squeezes his hand.

The look in their eyes shows such reciprocated admiration that for the first time my siblings and I realize how much our parents respect each other. Mom looks at my siblings and me. "That's right," she says. She has a serious expression on her face. "Sometimes I rode on an elephant's mouth," she says, "and sometimes I rode in an elephant's mouth." We all laugh. Mom laughs and nods. Still squeezing our father's hand, our mother extends her other hand to our father, who hands the magazine to her. She holds up the magazine for her children to see. She shows us the portrait picture of her grandfather that appears on the first page of the article. He is wearing a white hat and a suit. He is an older man in the picture, gray hair, wrinkled eyes. It looks like he is wearing a white starched shirt and a polka-dotted tie. He has a distinguished expression on his face. The twinkle in his eyes looks like a touch of magic, as if, like a circus act itself, he might step out of the picture and wink at us.

Mom sets the magazine in front of her on the table. She stares at her grandfather's picture for a long time. Nobody says anything for a while. Mom nods again. She holds up the magazine, folds back the pages, and points at the picture of her grandfather. She reads out loud the caption under the picture: "Ernest A. Harrington . . . circus owner." She looks at us. "And he rode right beside me," she says. She smiles. She looks closely at her grandfather's picture and then back up at her children and grandchildren. She remains silent. Her eyes sparkle, and she smiles again. And it's the kind of smile that makes you think she's smiling just for you.

I want to thank Joseph T. Bradbury for his 2001 *Bandwagon* essay about Ernest A. Harrington, Fred Dahlinger Jr., for his personal correspondence regarding Harrington, my daughter Laurie Champion, for writing "Looking for Babe," and finally, my daughter, Wendy Veal, for presenting to her mother copies of the edition of *Bandwagon* in which Mr. Bradbury's essay appears, perhaps the greatest gift she has ever received. My wish is that this tribute will be a close second. Happy birthday, Sweetheart. Love, Jerry.

(Sponsored Tribute)



# IN THE GREAT ROUTE TO EASTERN

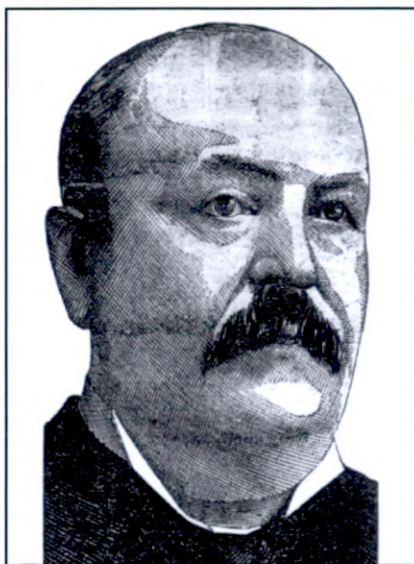
## PART THREE

By William L. Slout

Circuses that rushed to the South after the Civil War proved there was money to spend for good entertainment. They performed throughout the winter of 1865 for the first time since the start of armed conflict; and, as has nearly always been the case following a war, people made considerable sacrifices for entertainment to distract them from the hardships incident thereto. The major shows touring in that territory at this time were Haight's United States Circus, Thayer & Noyes United States Circus, Seth B. Howes' European Circus, and Dan Castello's Great Show.

Shortly after buying out George W. DeHaven in the fall of 1865 (see Part One), Andrew Haight moved the show to Louisiana. He was in Algiers October 27 and 28, before going across the river to Tivoli Circle, New Orleans, on October 30, where he played to good business through November 4. A move was made to another part of the city, Congo Square, for performances on the 6th through the 10th. "The canvas at Congo Square was crowded last night with an admiring audience, assembled to witness the entertaining and wonderful performances given by the talented troupe of the DeHaven & Co.'s Circus."<sup>1</sup>

The show then went to Mobile for a six-day stand beginning November 13. The Thayer & Noyes circus came to town for a five-day stand on the following day. A letter to *Clipper* proprietor Frank Queen from Haight, dated Shreveport, February 17, 1866, is indicative of the competition that occurred between the two shows. "Hearing of the statement made by Thayer & Noyes party in one of your late issues, and not being able to find the paper, I write you for reference. I



Dr. James L. Thayer. All illustrations are from the author's collection unless otherwise credited.

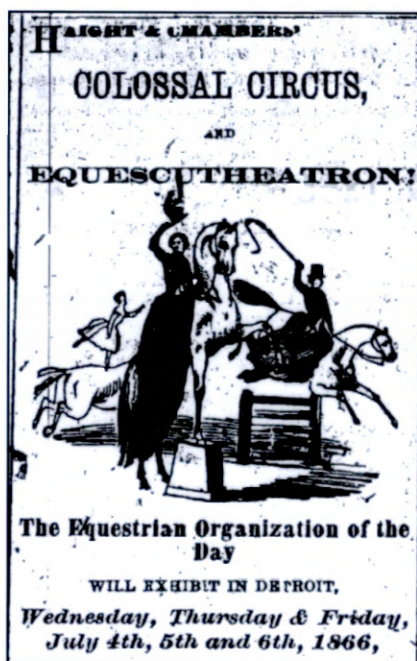
understand that Messrs. Thayer & Noyes claim to have taken fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) during their stay at Mobile, my company being there at the same time, and say that I took but four thousand dollars (\$4,000). Both companies played there one week, opposite each other. Now I contradict this, for I am thoroughly acquainted with the receipts of each company. The above gentlemen and myself paid the internal revenue tax at the same time, and their receipts were \$15,000 from the time they left Chattanooga, Tennessee, until the last day of their stay at Mobile, which was about three weeks or more. My receipts were \$4,000 at Mobile alone. I do not think they took any more money than I did in the five days in the last place. This statement I claim to be true, or else they made a false one to the tax collector." The letter was signed "A. Haight,

Proprietor of G. W. DeHaven & Co.'s Circus."<sup>2</sup>

Haight's organization achieved the distinction of becoming the first to take a circus into Texas after the war. Following the date in Mobile, the former DeHaven's United States Circus shipped out of New Orleans on the *Magnolia* for Galveston, arriving in time to set up its tents for the evening performance on Saturday, November 24. After sending its band out, the patrons, at \$1.00 each, crowded into the tent, a rush that amounted to a return of \$1,600, plus an additional \$400 from the minstrel sideshow. From billing the town on Sunday, the Monday take totaled \$2,200 and \$575; Tuesday, \$2,350 and \$600.

The company then went by rail to Houston for December 1, 2, 4, 5--Friday Saturday, Monday, Tuesday. On the 2nd the Houston edition of the *Galveston Daily News* carried this welcoming item. "The Circus has Come! Hurrah! All the world, especially the juvenile portion, was in motion yesterday and last night to witness the magnificent performances of the Great United Circus Company. The unrivaled feats of Mlle. Marie, Signer Bliss, etc., commanded universal applause. 'Old Sam Lathrop' and his assistants gave their hearers many hearty laughs. Of course 'Willie the Pet' met with the approval of all. But go and see by all means and remove the wrinkles from your face." The paper was also commendatory in its view of the circus personnel. "The Company is gentlemanly throughout. A due regard is paid by them to refinement of taste. A Circus Company nearly always at once attracts or repulses the feelings of a community. This one has done the former perfectly; and





This Haight & Chambers ad appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* on June 29, 1866.

their visit to the city will be remembered with pleasure.”<sup>3</sup>

A letter to the *Clipper* from a member of the company, dated Red River, February 15, is an enlightening portrait of their situation. “I now sit down to give you a little insight of our travels in Texas. We arrived in Galveston on the 25th of November, and played there five days to overflowing houses; thence to Houston where we turned away people; took railroad to Richmond, and there hired transportation on through to San Antonio, where we played one week to crowded houses, including Sunday. We then bought some horses and hired the rest, and set out through the wilds of Texas on towards Shreveport, Louisiana, and of all countries this beats all. Talk of Hottentots, cannibals, barbarians! Here they are everything but civilized, whooping and hollowing, shooting, and all come to the show with pistols and knives; they shoot through the canvas, and call you names that are not very pleasant to hear, and we have to take it all. We had no fuss with them, as we dare not open our mouths. They shoot all around us as we go to and from the canvas. Once in a while we come across a man that knows something, but not often.

“We have now our own conveyances. Our admission here was \$1 in specie, or \$1.50 in greenbacks, though we don't see many greenbacks, only where the Union soldiers are. For the horses, all we could get was corn, and poor at that. The horses all stand out doors. You can always find a shingle up at a grocery, go in and you will find a barrel of fighting whiskey made here, and it will kill two hundred yards at sight, also a few cards of gingerbread and some oysters.

“But after all we have made money, and eats, are paid every Sunday. Old man Haight pays up good; he is going to make a good showman; this is his first season. He started from Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, last April, and has run ever since. . . .

“We had three horses stolen from us in Bellevue, first town out of Henderson. We opened in Shreveport; Louisiana, on February. 12th, after a long and tedious journey among the Yahhoos and Gillipens, who would put a six-shooter in your mouth and ask you if that was good for a ticket, and one half the time in mud and the other half quarreling to get something to eat. We came out safe and sound and brought all our stock with us, but it was quite a difficulty on our part to do so.

“The company are all well, and start for Mobile February 18th. Mrs. Maginley (Mary Carroll) is riding a splendid act better than ever, and has made a tremendous hit in Shreveport. Barney Carroll is with the company, and is looking as young as ever, leaping over eight and nine horses every day. Ben Maginley made his first appearance in the ring at Shreveport and made a hit as clown. The company consists of W. B. Carroll, Master Willie, Burdeau, Carr, Naylor Brothers, Bliss Family, P. H. Seaman and Cary, clowns; Billy Manning, Harry Blood, Alex. Prentice, John Somers, Master Hubert, Master Jimmy, W. A. Johnson, Mlle. Marie and Mrs. Carroll.”<sup>4</sup>

At a March 7 date in Mobile, a benefit was given for the orphans of that city. One of the local papers was impressed with Barney Carroll's carrying act. “An extraordinary feature was introduced, which astonished the natives. A sweet little female

huncheypunchey, only fifteen months old, performed the wonderful feat of riding in different postures on the head, shoulders and arms of her father. She seemed to enjoy it hugely. She was seated on his hand at one time, and held out at arm's length while the two horses galloped around at a lively speed. This act is the greatest ever witnessed in or out of the ring.”<sup>5</sup>

Haight took his agent, Doc C. S. T. Chambers, as partner to form an 1866 summer tour of Haight & Chambers Circus. The opening of a three-day stand at Atlanta on April 23 brought in a sum of \$1,500. A correspondent from the show stated, “The representatives of Haight & Chambers' United Circus made their first grand procession in this place yesterday, creating a greater furor, if possible, than that of Sherman's some time ago, the only difference being he taking the town by strategy, we by storm, for it did storm as if heaven and earth were at loggerheads. . . . The arena being lighted up with fluid, together with big, fat Ben Maginley's gas—the only legitimate son of Momus in the biz disclosed to our gaze hundreds upon hundreds of the fair damsels of the Sunny South, together with the bone and sinew, making it a spectacle not often seen in this country.”<sup>6</sup>

The company's roster was similar to the previous year's. The Carroll family was back, along with Maginley and wife, Marie. She still dazzled the audiences with her leap through a twenty-inch hoop, perhaps the only equestrienne in the country at this time to accomplish the feat. The Bliss family was also a repeat. Signor Bliss was exhibiting his ceiling walking skills. Alongside were Sam Rhinehart, ten-horse leaper and a somersaulter; Signor Farranta, contortionist; William LaRue, general performer; Sam Lathrop, clown; William Naylor, rider; John Naylor, leaper and vaulter; Henry Burdeau and Carr, gymnasts and tumblers, and H. C. North, general performer. Master Charles Bliss ascended to the center-pole in the outdoor free act. Admission at this time was 75 cents and 50 cents.

The side show, managed by Billy Manning, consisted of a minstrel troupe of Manning, Phil Diffenbach



(minstrel show manager), Billy Sweethorn, Eugene Gorman, George Powers, Corporal Max, Millie Louise (fancy dancer), Murray and Walters (clog dancers), McArthur, etc., a group of fourteen performers.

The firm got rid of its baggage stock in Atlanta and took to rail. It moved north into Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio in April, reportedly doing good business. Louisville, Kentucky, was played for three days on May 7, 8 and 9, which, in spite of poor weather, seemed to have been profitable. "The pressure of other duties kept us from making but a very brief stay under the canvas," the man from the *Daily Courier* explained after visiting the opening, "but we saw enough to satisfy us that this is the best circus that has yet visited our city." He was most pleased with the performances of Marie and Ben Maginley. Noting that the canvas was full, he expressed a desire to see the complete show at another time. And indeed he did. "Notwithstanding the unpleasant walking last night, a large audience of both ladies and gentlemen were gathered at the circus. The quiet, order, and commendable absence of all rowdiness and vulgarity, speaks volumes of praise for the management, while the unexcelled performances by the meritorious corps of artists testify to their liberality and good taste."<sup>7</sup>

Two days in Indianapolis followed, May 18-19. Then there were stops in Maryland and Virginia. Baltimore was visited for a week beginning August 30 at the Belair lot. The opening performance was well received by the *American and Commercial Advertiser*. "This organization, depending solely on the merit of its performances, and not upon what is usually termed gulling the public, with a combined menagerie and circus, the menagerie consisting of nothing more than an exhibition of a few antiquated fossils in the form of lions, &c., has met with a proper and just success."<sup>8</sup>

Washington, D. C., was booked for three days beginning on September 6. At Charlottesville, Virginia, where the show appeared on September 18, the company visited the grave of Job Foster, who had died while with Robinson & Eldred in 1851, and per-

**HAIGHT & CHAMBERS'**  
**NEW ORLEANS CIRCUS!**



EVERYTHING NEW! EVERYTHING GORGEOUS!

The Grand Equestrian School of the Age, in which is presented only the MOST ELUCIDATE, DARING and REMARKABLE Sports of the Arena, executed in Matchless Style and Unrivalled Grace

**BY THE COLOSSAL TROUPE**  
 — OF —  
**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MISSES AND MASTERS,**  
Selected from the Principal Hippodromes and Circuses of  
**ENGLAND, FRANCE AND AMERICA.**

Whose combined performance form an Entertainment replete in absorbing interest and surrounding attraction, being remarkable for their Novelty, Grace, Style and Daring, and adaptation to the tastes and pleasures of the refined and intelligent community. The Company will exhibit!

**POSITIVELY THREE DAYS ONLY!**

This New Orleans Circus ad appeared in the *Memphis Daily Appeal* on September 29, 1867.

formed a respectful remembrance at the site.

A correspondent, writing from Oglethorpe, Georgia, on October 15 claimed that the show was doing well through Tennessee and Georgia. There was a two-day stand at Atlanta on October 9 and 10, which packed the 115-foot canvas. A correspondent writing on October 28 confirmed that the show had been "meeting with unbounded success, the spacious canvas being crowded upon each occasion to overflowing."<sup>9</sup>

The company went down the Alabama River from Montgomery to Selma, where it had a two-day stand on October 29 and 30, and was expected at Vicksburg, Mississippi, about November 20. Harry Tibbs, scenic rider and juggler on horseback, was added to the company about this time.

Haight then returned to Texas. A visit to Houston was successful. "The business with this company is represented as having never been excelled in that state," so read a *Clipper* item. "The circus, we are told, closed doors every night during the week beginning December 6, being unable to accommodate the multitudes." But in two weeks from that date the company had left the state and had arrived in New Orleans for a series of performances at Front Levee Street beginning on December 18. It moved

further up town for the 30th and continued there through January 6, after which the show broke up for the season.

The *Clipper* reported that there were eighteen circus organizations on the road in 1866, a year which did not equal the financial success of the previous one. Most of them did good business during the first four months, but in August and September all felt the pressure of hard times, and an inordinate amount of rainy weather exacerbated the situation. The forecast for 1867 was not promising; and, indeed, for Haight & Chambers the season became a series of misfortunes.

The two proprietors purchased the stem wheeler *Coosa* in February 1867 for \$30,000 and fitted it up expressly for circus use. They also arranged for ten cages of animals from Ames' Circus, which included performing cats under the whip of Ames' wife, Signora Ella Eugenia DeLorme. A *Clipper* item stated that the show carried fifty horses, 130 people and a 180-foot round top. That had to be a crowded boat.

Advertisements read, "The Largest and Best Show Traveling;" "Everything New! Everything Gorgeous! Forty-Nine Lady and Gentlemen Performers, Three Humorous and Witty Clowns;" and in the South, "The Only Southern Equestrian Confederation in Existence."

In the administrative department, Andrew Haight was manager; Dr. C. S. T. Chambers, agent; Fred Bailey, advertiser; O. B. Fowler, writer; Jacob Haight, Andrew's brother, treasurer; Heff Lengel, in charge of the animals; Tom Poland, equestrian director; and Prof. Stovey, musical director of a thirteen member band. Tom Fey was the boss canvasman, with Pete Garvey joining shortly as his assistant.

The performing roster was headed by English and Parisian equestrienne Marie Macarte, one of the first females to attain stardom in the United States; but who, at this point, was in her early forties. Supporting her and the "Lion Queen" were the Miaco Brothers, William Naylor, Sam Lathrop, Tom Burgess, Sam Rhinehart, Henrico Tubbs with his horse Stonewall, etc. Miss Jennie Day made a daily outside ascension



at 1 p.m., following the "grand procession."

George Conklin, the long time animal trainer, then a lad out of Ripley, Ohio, joined a circus for the first time with this show. He began working in advance with agent Frederick H. Bailey. His job was billing towns and announcing the coming of the circus at market places, blacksmith shops, courthouses, and assembling a crowd by ringing a bell. He recalled in his memoirs that a show bill was about a yard square, containing a few woodcuts and printed matter. One placed at a livery stable sufficed, it being the only safe spot where the youngsters would not tear it down. Bills were not pasted up at that time, rather fastened to a wall with tacks driven through small rounds of leather. Conklin worked about three days ahead of the show, riding on horses hired from livery stables, but returned every three or four days for instructions and supplies.

The pattern of travel was to stop at the larger settlements going up the river and then visit the places that had been skipped over on the way back down. Conklin estimated the attendance at each being from 2,500 to 3,000 people. Residents of the smaller places nearby were brought to the performances by free boat excursions. It was a good sized circus for those days, Conklin wrote, with eighteen or twenty performers and thirty-five or forty working men.<sup>10</sup>

The show started from New Orleans on March 14 and worked up the Mississippi to Memphis where a four-day stand beginning April 3 was rewarded with a good turnout. "One of the largest and most delightful audiences we ever remember having seen at any place of amusement was present last night at the inaugural exhibition of Messrs. Haight & Chambers Circus and Menagerie," so wrote a man from the *Daily Appeal*. "There can be no question that this is one of the most attractive and complete exhibitions that has ever visited the city, and one that all can feel a pleasure in witnessing." He judged the performance of Ella Eugenie in the dens of lions and bears to be "the most remarkable instances of female courage and daring ever witnessed." It rained the second day, yet the animal exhibitions from 10 a.m. to 12,

and the afternoon and night performances were crowded on each occasion to the utmost capacity of the canvas.

It appears that Herr Lengel alternated in the den performances with Ella Eugenie. The *Daily Appeal* reporter had praise for him in an April 6 item. "It is well known that the 'monarchs of the forest' are more fierce at some seasons of the year than others. Those now on exhibition here are so violent that the ordinary performer does not approach them, but Herr Lengel entered the den yesterday and subdued in a manner that we have never seen equaled." At the closing performance a foot race competition was arranged between representatives of the various Memphis fire companies, the prize being a silver drinking set. Company No. 2 was the winner, with fireman Phalen circling the ring ten times in a minute and eleven seconds.<sup>11</sup>

The show continued up river to Cairo, Illinois, for an April 9 engagement, after which it made a turn into the Ohio with intentions to go as far as Pittsburgh. But flooding interfered with the planned itinerary and forced the show to miss many of its dates, with some places being ten to fifteen feet under water. Evansville, Indiana, was safe for an April 15 visit, where the canvas on both occasions was filled, with hundreds being unable to obtain admission.

Sam Lathrop, the famous clown.

But that night a most unfortunate incident occurred. Some prankster opened the valve of the ship's boiler, allowing all of the water to escape. When the fireman lit up in preparation for moving on, the boiler was burned to ruin. Unable to continue the tour, the company pitched their tent again on the Evansville lot and peddled a few dodgers around town to alert the public of their unexpected return. The boiler problem required the

show to perform two more days there.

The *Coosa* was then towed to Henderson, Kentucky. Although the town had not been previously advertised, dodgers passed around were sufficient to encourage a satisfactory turnout. On April 20 the show was at Owensboro, Kentucky, after having been advertised to appear there on the 17th. And thus, it continued on, three days behind schedule while two new boilers were arranged to be installed. It got as far up the Ohio as Steubenville for a June 4 stand, then turned back for a three days at Cincinnati beginning on the 10th.

By July the *Coosa* had left the Ohio and was back moving up the Mississippi. It docked at Davenport, Iowa, on the 16th where a correspondent reported good business, afternoon and evening. At night the tent was filled to overflowing. "The leaping by the company was the best I have ever seen, led by young Sam Rhinehart, who performed on this occasion the feat of throwing a somersault over twelve horses, which was received with rounds of ap-

plause; he also accomplished the difficult feat of throwing a double somersault. Rhinehart is yet a young man, and if he continues to improve as he has since I last saw him, he will, without a doubt, soon have the right to claim the title of champion of the world. Mr. J. W. Naylor is also a good leaper, he having cleared nine horses on the same night. The principal act of horsemanship by Mr. William Naylor was excellent. The juggling on horseback by Harry Tibbs was well received. The

double trapeze by the Miaco brothers took the house by storm. The 'Musket Drill' by H. C. Childers, was performed in a very artistic manner and took big. The horizontal bar by Charles Clouney, assisted by the Miaco brothers, was good. Signorita









good stock and equipment, was sold and Haight went to Memphis, where he opened a hotel for the balance of the year.

John Hayes Murray.

The *Coosa* was sold to John Robinson, who used it to tow his circus for a season. She was then purchased by a private party from Cincinnati who ran moonlight excursions and similar events. Finally, as if still burdened by the Haight & Chambers curse, she was burned to the water's edge in the Licking River by an arsonist on the morning of September 7, 1869.

Andrew Haight was more interested in controlling the fate of his circus by making decisions as an agent in advance than by daily remaining on the lot. After all, he had his brother to see to his financial interests there. So he spent the two seasons ahead of the Stone & Murray Circus, a high-class company that had no menagerie, but always carried a fine stud of horses and ponies. The two proprietors, very intelligent and capable circus men, were more concerned with quality than quantity. Here Haight perfected his skills in advance of this company for the seasons of 1869 and 1870.

He became noted for driving a close bargain and rarely getting the worst of it.

Proprietor Murray was quoted as saying, "If there is any fault in Andy Haight, he is too close a contractor." This persuasive ability earned for him the sobriquet of "Slippery Elm." A peculiarity was his wearing clothes in the fashion of a clergyman. Press agent Charles H. Day described a fast meeting with him in a railroad office. "The railway official was in close communication with a clerical individual whom I at once took for the pastor of a local church arranging for a Sunday school excursion. He was dressed in solemn black, wore a vest buttoned to his throat, and displayed no jewelry, while meekness and piety seemed to ooze from every pore of his placid countenance."<sup>17</sup>

A similar misidentification occurred

in when Haight was in St. John, New Brunswick, with his Empire City Circus. Upon meeting the mayor, he bowed ceremoniously and said, "Your Honor, we are coming to be with you for a little while and I have called to consult you in regards to license."

"Not necessary, sir," the mayor replied hastily, "you are at perfect liberty to preach without a license."

Haight was back in circus management for the 1871 season. He bought two performing dens of wild animals from the late C. T. Ames estate (Ames died on November 2, 1870), acquired some camels, and organized the Empire City Circus with P. Bowles Wooten, a mule dealer from Atlanta, for 1871. It was also referred to as Wooten and Haight's New York Circus and Menagerie.

The early season roster included equestrians Mlle. Ellouise LeClaire and Ella Stokes; Mlle. Andrews and Mile. Louise, rope-walkers; Barney Carroll, with Master Willie and Petite Annie; the Watson Brothers, Edwin, George and Thomas; the lion queen Mile. Minnie Williams, assisted by W. B. Reynolds; clowns Signor Bliss, Jean Johnson and Billy Andrews; J. C. Long, Hercules and light and heavy balancer; and Jerome Tuttle, double somersaulter. There was Heff Kopp's Silver Comet Band, that paraded the streets in the "Oriental Chariot of Oberoe" drawn by twelve Arabian horses. W. W. Durand was the general agent, and A. R. Scott, the contracting agent. George DeHaven and Jacob Haight had the privileges. Prof. Renno, made daily ascensions, in his hot air balloon.

The circus opened its doors to the public at Duluth, Georgia, on April 1 and then headed north, covering an area that included Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York state. At Jamestown, New York, there was a day and date with Sheldenburger & Co.'s Menagerie and Circus (a John V. O'Brien concern). Both parties advertised extensively and developed a rivalry that created strong anticipation for their arrival. Being a railroad show, Haight did not make much of an entrance; but the

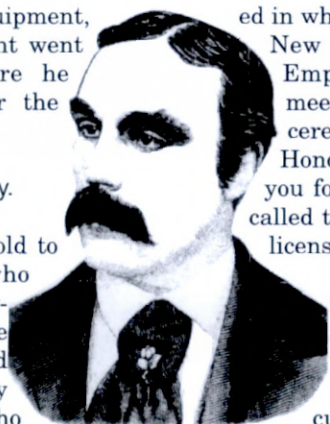
Sheldenburger, a wagon show, were said to have "come in strong," with cages gaily ornamented, new uniforms on their band members and drivers and colorful flags unfurled. "This captivated the people and both afternoon and night their pavilion was crowded."<sup>18</sup> In June the show was in the New England states, going as far north as Maine. Following dates in Calais on July 3 and 4, it went into Canada for the rest of the summer months, where business was reported good.

Following the incursion of the provinces, Haight and Wooten's company went through reorganization in Boston beginning September 9. New wardrobe and paraphernalia were acquired, as well as a 125-foot tent with a "cottage front," all in preparation for a southern tour.

The outfit was loaded onto the steamer *Seminole*, under Capt. Matthews, which set a course for Savannah, Georgia, arriving at 8:00 pm on September 14. "She had a full freight and a large list of passengers, among which was Wooten & Haight's Circus Company, eighty performers, and a large number of horses, cages, &c."<sup>19</sup> As the boat steamed up the river, the spectators ashore were serenaded by Herr Kopp's brass band in anticipation of Haight and Wooten's return to Georgia after a year's absence.

The show had reentered a part of the country where the citizenry were enthusiastic to claim it as their own. "This circus was organized in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1870, and it is a purely Southern affair, which of itself should be a recommendation from it to our people. Both the managers are natives of Atlanta, and well known in that section, while the performers are, in the majority, Southern men. . . . Taken as a whole, we suppose that this circus can lay just claims to being the most complete and extensive one now on exhibition, and as our people are cognizant of the fact that it is not a Yankee humbug, but a legitimate and deserving institution composed of men who, although engaged in what is generally conceded to be a 'Yankee calling,' are Southern in sentiment. We bespeak for the circus a liberal patronage while in the city."<sup>20</sup>

This was a two-day stand, but





because of a late arrival the previous day, the first performance was delayed until the evening of the 15th. At 5:00 p.m. the show's aeronaut made his balloon ascension and Harry Wambold walked the wire from the ground to the center-pole and back. You can bet the side show was up and running and the concession stands ready to serve the crowd who came to see the free attractions. "Persons of all grades, sex and variety gathered to witness the grand event of a genuine balloon going up, and a real live man going in it."<sup>21</sup>

A balloon ascension as a circus free act, as we have indicated, was initiated in 1870. Although lighter than air vessels had been exhibited in this country since the late eighteenth century and were used sparingly during the Civil War, they were a novelty in most places circuses visited. The *Savannah Morning News'* description of such an event illustrates the excitement caused by the phenomenon. "At the appointed hour the balloon was detached, and with its cargo of one man went sailing up into the air, while the band struck up the merry peals of 'Up In The Balloon, Boys.' The cheering was immense. Those who never cheered before now opened their lungs the more, and away went the daring aeronaut gaily plowing the air above.

"When the balloon arose it took a northwesterly course over the city, and when somewhere near vicinity of the Exchange, it began rapidly to descend. The people on the streets seeing that it would inevitably fall in the river, a general rush was made for the Exchange dock. When directly over Bay Street, the man in the balloon divested himself of his coat, hat and boots, and, it would seem, was ready for the splash that he and his cloth vessel in a few minutes made in the middle of the river. When he fell, he was soon pulled on board a boat, and, with the exception of getting a ducking, escaped unhurt.

"When the man came on shore, there was something less than seventy-five thousand people on the wharf,

who exhibited the wildest excitement. Men halloed, women shrieked, little boys shouted, boot blacks whistled, chimney sweeps screamed, and dogs barked, the whole making one grand hullabaloo, which would forcibly remind one of a flock of ten thousand geese invaded by a mean looking hound dog.

"The man was escorted by about a thousand interested people to his boarding house, when the crowd dispersed, each one to tell his experience of what he knows about the balloon."

## STONE & MURRAY'S CIRCUS IS COMING.



## THE BEST IN THE WORLD.

A Stone & Murray Circus lithograph used in 1870. Library of Congress collection.

This auspicious welcome extended to the opening performance. "Not within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant has so large a crowd been collected within a circus tent as was attracted last night to welcome Messrs. Haight & Wooten's troupe of equestrians. For an hour previous to the beginning of the performance, the streets were lined with one surging mass of humanity, so that by 8 o'clock the capacious pavilion was filled to overflowing, several hundreds being compelled to retire

unable to gain admission."<sup>22</sup>

The show moved to Augusta for the 19th and 20th onto a lot near the Augusta Hotel, where it received a similar reception. "Notwithstanding the very heavy rains, the performances were attended by large crowds. The exhibition came fully up to what was expected, and gave entire satisfaction to all who were present."<sup>23</sup> This day the valiant aeronaut experienced a near miss of repeating a plunge into the Savannah River, landing as he did on its bank. Unfavorable weather persisted into the second day; but, in spite of it, attendance was large, so wrote the *Daily Chronicle and Sentinel* of September 21. "The company has made a very favorable impression during its short stay in our city, and will be substantially remembered on its next visit."

Atlanta was a successful three-day stand on September 28, 29 and 30. This was confirmed by a post-opening report. "Yesterday afternoon and evening the streets presented a gay and animated appearance. Upon Mr. Haight placing a piece of cardboard in our hand, we passed into the spacious and excellent pavilion in the rear of James block, and above the passenger depot, and found out what was the matter with Hannah and every other man, for everything was crowded a seat, a standing place, or even a pole could be found to hang on. It is estimated that over three thousand were present. We could not realize that this magnificent enterprise had grown to such an extent in so short a space."<sup>24</sup> Although the Chattahoochee River beckoned, our aeronaut steered clear of it. This time, with the floating balloon showing frequent signs of collapsing, the professor landed safely on the roof of a building on the corner of Fraser and Rawson Streets.

P. Bowles Wooten was gone early in November. The proprietors did not agree and the show, by common consent, was auctioned off, Haight buying most of the property, DeHaven the rest. The circus now traveled under the name of Haight & Co. Wooten acquired animals from some-



one; for but two months after his departure from Haight & Wooten he was out with Wooten & Andrews' Great Southern Menagerie and Calisthenic Exposition, moving around Georgia.

A frightening incident occurred as the company was preparing to leave Amite City, Mississippi, for New Orleans on November 16. A group of about twenty-five men on horses set upon them as they were boarding the train. Two shots were fired, one hit a camel in the side and the other pierced a passenger car that contained the women and children. The men in the company left the train and were able to capture two of the raiders, who were then taken to New Orleans and placed in the lock-up.<sup>25</sup>

The C. T. Ames collection of animals was auctioned off at the Rink in Cincinnati on the 14th of November. Haight & Co., which had acquired a new tent for their menagerie in late October, claimed to have purchased a part of it, greatly extending the size of the animal exhibit. "The Management, at an enormous expense, have purchased the entire and complete Menagerie of the late Colonel C. T. Ames which in conjunction with their own makes the largest and most splendid collection of Zoological wonders in the world, embracing SIXTEEN MASSIVE DENS OF LIVING WILD ANIMALS."<sup>26</sup> This claim runs contrary to an item published in the *Clipper*, which listed the purchases and the buyers of the Ames collection. Neither Haight nor DeHaven were included.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, advertisements listed a monster elephant, Bismark, and a baby elephant, Pet, in addition to hyenas, a sloth, a cheetah, two dens of lions, tigers and panthers, a lioness with six two month old cubs, monkeys and birds.

Charleston's January 18 and 19 appearances were further examples of the company's success. It arrived there by way of the Savannah and Charleston Railroad and set up on the Citadel Green, from which the usual balloon ascension took place. By now the aeronaut was a Mr. Garbood. This time the man landed precariously upon a shed of the Ann Street depot of the South Carolina Railroad.

"In the evening there was an

immense attendance of ladies and gentlemen, who witnessed the startling feats of grand and lofty tumbling, equestrianism, and the gymnasium, with evident delight. The whole program was carried out to the letter, and in a manner that establishes this company as one of the most perfect traveling organizations of the kind we have ever seen. The menagerie is well supplied with the wonders of the forest. The side shows contain a Swiss warbler, a dwarf, a magician, whose tricks are unfathomable."<sup>28</sup>

The long season was terminated on February 17 in Atlanta. The outfit was then moved to Cincinnati, where it was combined with other elements to form the 1872 tour of the Great Eastern Circus.

#### NOTES

1. Robert J. Loeffler, Part 4, p. 28, quoting from the New Orleans *Southern Star*, November 8, 1865.

2. New York *Clipper*, March 2, 1912. Haight's reaction was the result of an item in the Mobile *Daily Times* of December 15. "Amusement statistics--The books of the assessor and collector of the two percent tax for the United States revenue, on the gross receipts of exhibitions, enabling us to give the proceeds of the three circuses that exhibited here last month. Thayer & Noyes paid two percent upon the receipts of \$15,453 for five days, commencing Nov. 14. DeHaven paid two percent upon the receipts of \$4,903.70, for six days, commencing November 13. S. B. Howes paid two percent upon \$8,813.55, for two weeks commencing November 20." New York *Clipper*, February 17, 1912. There had been an on-going feud between the organizations of S. B. Howes and Thayer & Noyes.

3. Galveston *Daily News*, December 2 and 3, 1865. "Willie the Pet" referred to the petite Master William, whom Barney Carroll used in his carrying act.

4. New York *Clipper*, March 10, 1866, from a letter posted from Red River, February 15, 1866.

5. New York *Clipper*, March 24, 1866.

6. New York *Clipper*, May 5, 1866.

7. Louisville (KY) *Daily Courier*, May 8 and 9, 1866.

8. Baltimore (MD) *American and Commercial Advertiser*, September 3, 1866.

9. New York *Clipper*, December 22, 1866.

10. George Conklin, *The Ways of the Circus*, pp. 2-3.

11. Memphis (TN) *Daily Appeal*, April 4, 6 and 7, 1867.

12. New York *Clipper*, July 27, 1867.

13. New York *Clipper*, September 4, 1867.

14. Also listed in September were Henrico Tubbs, Tom Poland, Samuel Hinds, Gus Shaw, Tom Burgess, Jennie and Nellie Day, Mattie McCall, Miaco Brothers, H. Bernard.

15. Galveston (TX) *Daily News*, December 3, 1867.

16. From a letter to Frank Queen, dated Houston, Texas, January 19, 1868, carried in the New York *Clipper* of February 15, 1868. Richard E. Conover's version is somewhat different, but unfortunately there is no citation. According to him, following the closing at Houston, "[Haight] had, however, taken the precaution beforehand to send his brother, Jacob Haight, north with what money there was (rumored to have been \$60,000) so that there would be little for his partner, the performers, or the working men to attach when he did not pay off." Conover, *The Circus, Wisconsin's Unique Heritage*, p. 13.

17. Charles H. Day, "With Tights and Spangles," New York *Clipper*, July 13, 1872.

18. New York *Clipper*, May 27, 1871.

19. Savannah (GA) *Morning News*, September 7 and 15, 1871.

20. Savannah (GA) *Morning News*, September 7, 1871.

21. Savannah (GA) *Morning News*, September 16, 1871.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Augusta (GA) *Constitution and Sentinel*, September 20, 1871.

24. Atlanta (GA) *Constitution*, September 29, 1871.

25. New York *Clipper*, December 2, 1871.

26. Advertisement, Charleston (SC) *Daily Courier*, January 9, 1872.

27. New York *Clipper*, November 25, 1871.

28. Charleston (SC) *Daily Courier*, January 19, 1872.





# Bill Woodcock's Circus Album

The first photo is Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1941 when it was without a doubt the biggest show that ever traveled. It was on 110 cars and carried 47 elephants. The man at right is Leo "Possum Red" Harsh, and he once described to me how this unit was assembled, but I never could quite get a handle on it. Possum said that the two elephants in front and the two in back wore some sort of ox yoke from which the throne in the center was suspended.

I imagine that these four elephants would be stretched out, then saddled up with the howdahs and yokes. Then from an upright position the center section would be lifted and attached. Ladders would have to be used to drape the blankets and load up the ladies.

If I understood Possum correctly, he said that this unit didn't go around the track, but only went into the center ring where it remained throughout spec. In those days the back door was always directly behind the center ring.

In 1978 while making preparations to go on the Blue unit of Ringling-Barnum, I suggested a double howdah but was told that the back door in Madison Square Garden was 10' 2" and all equipment was built with that in mind. I was also told that elephants marching two abreast was impractical in some buildings, if not impossible.

I don't know the circus in the next photo, but as we all know this is a Pit Show. To the uninformed, the man with the camera is operating a "Mug Joint," meaning he took your picture. Dealing three-card monte was called "Tossing Broads," and operators of such an activity were referred to as a "Broad Mob."

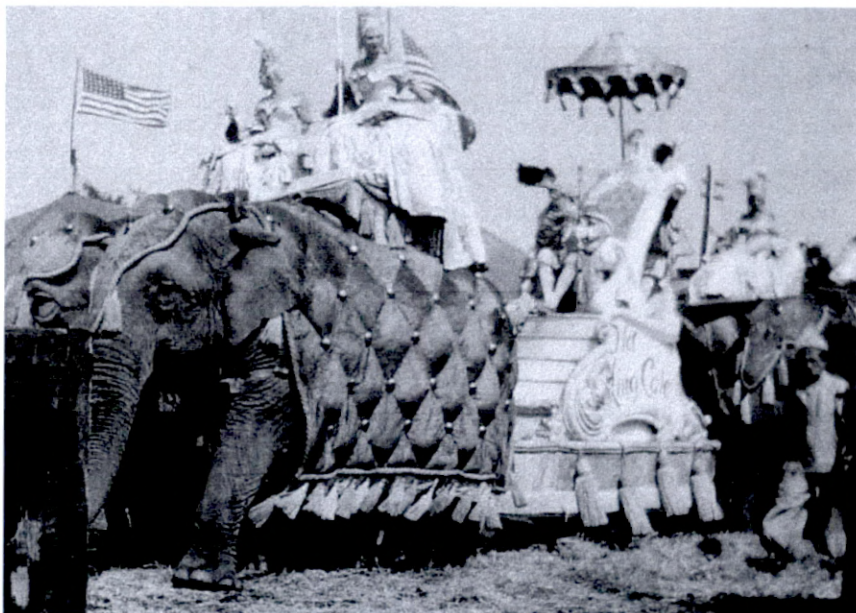
A fortune teller's area was called a "Mitt Camp." Arky Scott, the elephant man, told me that when he was with Lee Bros. Circus, George Christy's second unit, in the mid-



1920s, the sideshow people had to appear in spec. The lady fortune teller was alarmed when informed she would have to ride an elephant. She asked Arky, "Any chance of me falling off?" Arky replied, "You're the fortune teller." I wonder if I could book this six-legged cow with Soleil?

Our next picture is of the animal people who joined Robbins Bros. Circus late in the 1938 season after Cole Bros., its sister show, closed early. Missing is elephant boss Eddie Allen who departed when the Cole show started missing paydays.

Alonzo Dever, who was now in charge of the elephants, is standing in the front row, third from left. That's Clyde and Harriet Beatty, of course, seated in the middle. On their left is Arky Scott who eventually took over the Cole show elephants. At the close of the season, Beatty received three elephants, Mary, Sidney, and Anna May, as well as his cat act in lieu of back wages. I'm not aware of Cole show owner Zack Terrell ever having another cat act with the show as long as he owned it. I know they never had one while my family and I were there.







My father never let me get around elephants. He always said I should be out front where the money was. I was usually a candy butcher, but in 1952 I sold sideshow tickets. Here is a picture I stumbled across. The moment it was taken Mel Lewis has just finished the opening, the sideshow performers are coming down off the bally platform and Charlie Weathersby and his Syncopators are beating out Sweet Georgia Brown. That's yours truly in the ticket box, counting all the money from the come in.

I put up and took down the banner line. I loaded and unloaded the bally platform, ticket boxes, lights, sound equipment, etc. It was an easy job. There were quite a few stakes to drive if the lot was hard, but I was 17 and a big kid already. I noticed the banners are at half mast; it must have been a pretty windy day.

When big circuses started moving

on rails in the early 1870s, they now had the wherewithal to carry large herds of elephants as opposed to the one or two carried by the overland shows. The race was on. The man who rose to the occasion was Stewart Craven. In the 1850s and 1860s he was with Van Amburgh, the Mabie brothers, and Adam Forepaugh.

Craven came up with the idea of the pyramid type elephant act which is still in use today. I have also heard it referred to as a Military Drill. Elephants doing cross mounts from tubs was a sensation in the 1870s.

His first effort was a five act with Howes Great London in 1875. The following year he put another five act



*Stewart Craven, Master Elephant Trainer*

together for Cooper & Bailey. Among the Howes elephants were Basil and Babe (Hebe) who would provide Cooper & Bailey with the first surviving calf born in America. The baby was born on March 10, 1880 and was named Columbia.

Craven didn't travel with the show; in fact, it was said that he became something of an animal dealer, importing the elephants himself, breaking them into an act, then selling the act to the highest bidder. In any event, each act was better than the last.

The act that always captured my fancy was the "Forepaugh Dancing Eight," trained in 1877. The name remained with the act for the next 30 years. When the Ringlings discontinued the Forepaugh-Sells Circus after the 1911 season, there still remained two or three of the elephants from the original act.

Craven's last act was for the Barnum show in 1878 when the Flatfoots were running it. He then retired to his ranch in Texas, dying in Dallas in 1890. The inscription on this photo of Craven tells you all you need to know about him.





# Side Lights On The Circus Business

## PART FORTY SIX

By David W. Watt

*Editor's note. The dates listed are the dates the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Daily Gazette.*

**June 14, 1919**

To meet an old friend whom you had not seen in 37 years and have him recognize you is certainly going some. Tuesday I was returning from the Northwestern Depot when suddenly I came on to a group of half a dozen men who were connected with the Carnival Company. One of them spoke and said: "Are you not Dave Watt?" When I told him that was supposed to be my name, he smiled and asked me if I knew him.

"Well," said I, "my eyesight has been bad for some years and you look very much to me like thousands of other men whom I might meet, and I do not know that I have ever seen you before." He did not tell me his name, but said: "Mr. Watt, I joined the Adam Forepaugh show in 1882, April 6, the same day that you joined, and at that time, I was some five or six weeks under 14 years of age and my next birthday I will be 51. This young man here is my son, and I have my wife with me, two son-in-laws and two daughters. We have privileges here with the Carnival Company and I have been in the business continually ever since I joined the Forepaugh show in '82.

"My name is Harry LaDell, and I was top mount in the three-brother act known as the LaDell Brothers. You paid us off every Wednesday for three years. In '85 we joined the Batcheller & Doris show and started out from Erie, Pennsylvania. At that time it was the winter quarters of the

show. Scranton, Pennsylvania was my home for years in my younger days, but as several of the different shows that I have traveled with later went south and many times worked up until after holidays and opened the next season early in the spring. Dave, I am like thousands of others who have traveled with the Adam Forepaugh shows; I have always said it was the best home that we ever had while in the business."

Tuesday evening I went back into Harry's refreshment stand which he and his wife had charge of, but the wife had to do the work as Harry was relating many interesting incidents that happened with the Adam Forepaugh show which I had long since forgotten. He told the story about the straw hats which I had forgotten about. It made quite a disturbance around the show for some time. It was about the week before September the first when a large sign was hung up in the menagerie and dressing room which read;

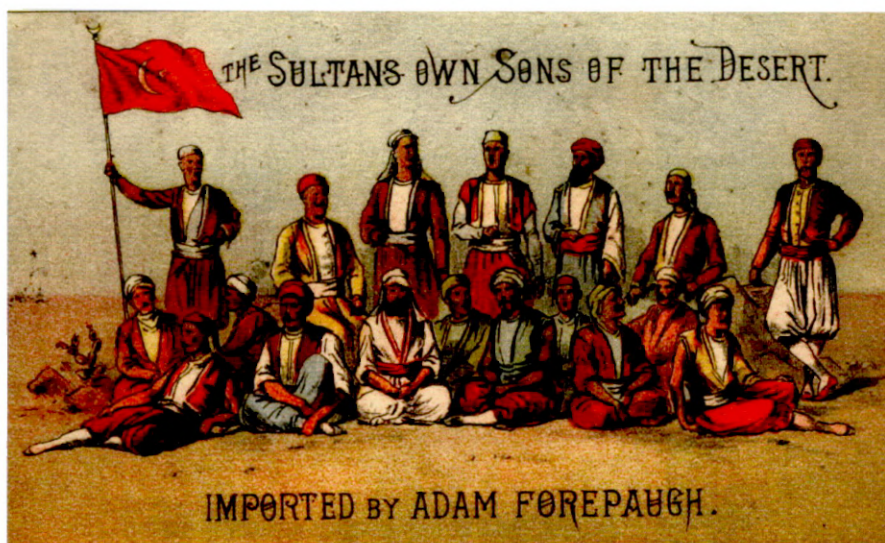


"Straw Hats Must Go September the First." Mr. Forepaugh and everyone connected with the front of the show was warned and the boys had fixed a big tub of water and mud and filth. As fast as they could find anyone around the show with a straw hat on, he was surrounded by 20 or more and his hat taken and thrown into the tub. They made a visit to the front door of the show and a little before time to open and found Adam Forepaugh himself and one of the door tenders with straw hats on; both were taken and thrown into the tub the same as though they belonged to the working class.

A little time before the show opened, a performer, who had a straw hat on in the dressing room was grabbed and in a second had his hat in the tub and ruined. He undertook to put up a fight, but was soon overpowered and found that everybody around the show was against him. He finally made his way to the front door and reported it to Adam Forepaugh who was sitting there in what he called the "Lookout Chair." When he told the old man his story, Mr. Forepaugh told him that they grabbed his hat and destroyed it, and there was no one to blame but himself, for he had fair warning and further stated that his own hat was just worth a dozen of his hats and if he wanted another hat, to go and buy it. The young man said: "This show is largely made up of roughnecks in the dressing rooms and I am going to quit." The old man said, "You don't want to quit right now, do you?" He said, "Yes sir, unless you people get me a new hat." Mr. Forepaugh immediately gave him a small piece of paper which read: "Dave, pay the man off in full." I did, and he went back to the front door and told Mr. Forepaugh that he wanted to go through to the next town. The old man told him that he never carried outsiders on his train and if he wanted to get to the next town, he would have to take a passenger train.

As soon as Harry had related the circumstances, I recollected well, but like many other incidents it had long since slipped my mind. While Harry LaDell has put in 37 years of the best of his life in the business, he has raised a nice family and has got them all with him. He is always proud to





An 1880s Adam Forepaugh Circus trading card.

introduce them to his friends. Visits of this kind with old friends help to make life worth living.

The following letter is from Newport, Rhode Island which, for many years, has been the one great summer resort for the millionaires of the east and one of the most interesting towns to me in my time--has built up so fast in the last few years that it seems to be almost impossible to get the show grounds. The Adam Forepaugh show showed at Newport during the height of the season and the afternoon and night shows were packed. Many of the millionaires took show people to their homes which they called "cottages" that cost millions of dollars. They had beautiful stables, some of them having two or more horses. If the circus was as interesting to them as the wonderful homes were to the show people, then they certainly got the worth of their money.

"The big circuses have been forced to drop Newport because of inability to procure suitable lots on which to show. A medium-sized show was booked to appear here this week, but the date for some reason was pushed back three weeks. The lot is now in the hands of contractors and a real estate agent is trying to find another show ground. Extensive building alterations are said to be the reason for the lack of grounds large enough for circus purposes."

The following letter of elephants going on a rampage last week put me

in mind of the 29 elephants which went in nearly that many directions in Fremont, Nebraska when lightning struck the tent and burned it down, only that it took our elephant man four days to gather them back to the show.

"Marblehead, Mass., May 29--The police and scores of citizens engaged in an elephant hunt here today. Four of the big animals broke away from their keepers while preparations were being made for the transfer to Peabody of a circus which showed here yesterday. They headed for the woods along the shore of Salem Harbor. The elephants finally were captured after their keepers had enticed them from the woods with peanuts and bananas."

#### June 21, 1919

Saturday last I received word of the death of an old friend of mine by the name of Sam Watson. Right here I want to say that he was one of the finest types of manhood that I ever knew, his word was his bond and he had traveled, as you might say, all over the world and at different times had been connected with the best shows in the country.

Sam was a typical Englishman and with his broad accent, he was one of the most interesting characters to visit with that I had ever met. I have sat up many a night late and listened to his interesting stories of his travels. I think, some years ago, I told you of the trip that we took into the interior while with Adam Forepaugh to engage a troupe of 22 Arabs. This trip of 350 miles was made on camels

across the desert and it took several weeks to engage the troupe for the coming season. This, I think, was the first large troupe of Arabs ever brought to this country, and as it was a wild country, they had to take trusted men with them who would watch all night while they were in camp.

Sam, in his early life, was a bare-back rider and one of the top notchers. For several years with Adam Forepaugh his salary was about \$150 per week. As soon as the show closed in the fall, he would take the first boat for across the water to buy or hire anyone that he would consider would be a feature for the show in this country.

It was about the middle '80's that he and Adam Forepaugh had some misunderstanding and Sam quit the show and spent the balance of the season and the winter in organizing what for many years was one of the big features of the Majestic circuit. It was known as Sam Watson's Barnyard circus. It was something like 12 or more years ago that I had been in Milwaukee, and while passing the Majestic Theatre, I noticed a large bill in front which read "Don't fail to see Sam Watson's Barnyard Circus." I stopped at the ticket office and asked the ticket agent if he could tell me where Mr. Watson was stopping. He said that he and his wife were stopping at the Republic Hotel. I was soon at the hotel and asked the clerk if Mr. Watson was there. He said that he was in his room. I told him to tell Mr. Watson that there was a man in his office that would like to see him.

Sam came down and took a look at me, but he did not place me until I told him who I was. He welcomed and hung onto me as if I was a long lost brother. He immediately sought his wife whom I have never met and introduced us. Mrs. Watson said: "This is the ticket seller who was with the Forepaugh show of whom you had talked to me so many times."

After a few minutes talk Sam said to his wife: "Mother, Mr. Watt and I are going out for a walk, and I will take him over to the theatre and introduce him to the people who, I think, are practicing."

Mrs. Watson spoke up and said that she was as good a fellow as Mr.



Watson and she would go too. We walked over to where about half a dozen boys and girls were practicing. By this time, it was about 10 o'clock or after, and after a few minutes with my newly made friends, Mrs. Watson excused herself and said she would be back in a few minutes and for us not to go until she came.

The side door of the theatre opened into a cafe of the Schlitz Hotel, and in a few minutes three or four waiters brought in tables. In less than half an hour there were 29 of us enjoying a luncheon that was certainly a good one. Mrs. Watson paid all the bills and said to Mr. Watson: "This is in honor of your old friend."

The Barnyard circus consisted of all the animals that you would find on a farm, and they were trained to do everything except to talk. Some two or three years later, he sold out his show to other parties. The last time that the Barnum & Bailey show left Janesville, Sam Watson was with a half dozen high leaping horses and in addition to this had a clown act. I visited with him in the railroad yards until the train was ready to pull out. This was the last word I had heard from him until I heard of his death last Saturday. This only goes to show how many old friends of years ago are going out so suddenly.

Henry S. Rubien passed away suddenly Friday evening while out driving in his auto, the end coming almost without warning. Accompanied by Arthur Murphy and several little children, Mr. Rubien had gone for a ride shortly after supper. Those in the car had stopped to gather some flowers about 15 minutes before, as the auto neared the First Ward School, Mr. Rubien, with rare presence of mind, stopped his car, murmured the name of his physician, made a faint effort to aid himself and succumbed.

For the past nine years the deceased had suffered with heart trouble, but it was thought that with the summer's rest his condition would improve. His death was a severe blow to Mrs. Rubien who was attending the theatre when notified of her husband's demise. News of the death of Mr. Rubien quickly spread and came as a great shock to his many friends. He was of an unusually generous and genial disposition

and especially fond of children which was evidenced by the number of little ones to whom he was bringing pleasure in a car ride when he came to his untimely end. Mr. Rubien had a host of friends among the circus fraternity, having been connected with Ringling Brothers show for many years. He was 44 years of age and besides his wife is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. Rubien, Chicago and two brothers, John in Chicago and Ed, who lives in Morenci, Arizona.

"Sid" Rubien as he was familiarly known around the Ringling show for more than 20 years, had charge of the lemonade and candy stands and was the son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Alexander, better known in Janesville as "Delavan." Several members of the combined Barnum & Bailey show came on to the funeral including Charles Ringling, Lew Graham and Ed Rubien, brother, from the Hagenbeck-Wallace show.



Jeremiah Mabie of Delavan, Wisconsin.

Ringling Brothers in appreciation of the long and faithful service, sent a blanket of roses which covered the entire casket with his name woven in the center. This has been typical of the Ringling Brothers for years. He was paid high tribute and they always did the same for all those who had been connected with the show for years.

## June 28, 1919

I have been asked the question so many times by different ones as to the value of the big shows such as the Adam Forepaugh, the great Ringling or the Barnum show, and what it would cost or had cost to build them up to their present size, and yet, so far as I know, the question has gone unanswered.

The only show of considerable size that was ever bought out by cash in the early days was the Mabie show which, up to the time of Mr. Mabie's death, had its winter quarters at Delavan Lake, where Mr. Mabie owned several hundred acres of land. . . . Adam Forepaugh came on from Philadelphia, built spacious winter quarters, remodeled and added many thousands of dollars to the show and started it out in the spring of 1865 under the name of the Adam Forepaugh [Dan Rice] show. The other shows, as far as I know, were gradually built up from a small beginning and when the owners passed away, they brought but little money compared with the cost of building them up to their enormous size at the time they passed into the hands of new owners.

Just what the Sells brothers show brought I am unable to say, but the Adam Forepaugh show, which had cost first and last possibly well up into the millions, brought only \$160,000 when it was obliged to be sold according to the will. It passed into the hands of James A. Bailey and James E. Cooper who many years before, were proprietors of the Cooper & Bailey show, the first one to make a trip around the world. After the sale was made, Adam Forepaugh's widow wrote me saying she had sold the show and my contract with the new firm was good, although it was only verbal.

She sent me the names of the new proprietors and said that I had better write them if I cared to keep on with the show. This I did and waited some two or three weeks without getting any answer and finally received a letter from James E. Cooper saying they had looked the contracts over thoroughly and found that I had no contract for the coming season and that I was not wanted with the show. They understood very well that my con-



tract was verbal and as good as any as that was the kind of a contract that I had been working under for several years. I immediately answered saying that I would be there in time and would expect my old position at the same salary as with Mr. Forepaugh. I soon got an answer from J. T. McCaddon, the acting manager and Mr. Cooper saying: "You might just as well stay in Janesville, for you cannot go to work with this show."

Some ten days before time for the show to open I arrived in Philadelphia and reported at the main office on Chestnut Street, where some 40 of the heads of departments were at work getting everything in shape for the opening. I introduced myself to Mr. McCaddon who immediately went into a rage and wanted to know who sent for me. I told him that it was not necessary to send for me, that I had made many trips over the same road, always traveling first class and when my season was ended, I would return in the same manner.

"Well," said he, "you might as well start back today, for there is no room for you or your kind around the show. I reported this to John L. Brown, for many years Adam Forepaugh's legal advisor, and he said: 'Dave, be on the show grounds in ample time the day of the opening and demand your position. If it is not given to you, come to me and I will pay you for your season's work and I will see that they pay me.'"

This I did, but found instead of being allowed to sell the tickets in the wagon as I had always done, they had three men in my place, and I was left out in the street. These men had never sold tickets before, and in the course of a few minutes, many dissatisfied patrons were at the main entrance, some adults with children's tickets, others who had been overcharged and about 400 or 500 dissatisfied people were fighting with the door tenders. James A. Bailey of the Barnum show came over from New York and immediately asked where Dave Watt, an old ticket agent of the Adam Forepaugh show, was and went on saying that he thought Dave was the only one that would be in the wagon. Mr. Cooper and Mr. McCaddon said: "He is standing out



Robert C. Campbell, circus general agent.

in front of the side show, but we didn't want him with the show and notified him so on his arrival several days ago."

Mr. Bailey said: "He has the best recommendations in the world and why you don't want him is more than I can see."

Mr. Cooper said: "He has never shown us any recommendation from Mr. Forepaugh and we don't want him."

"His eleven years of service in the ticket wagon with Mr. Forepaugh is recommendation enough for me and I am going to put him in that wagon tonight and say to him: Sell the tickets and pay the bills just as you have always been in the habit of doing, and if this is not satisfactory to me, I will ask him to do it my way."

Just after selling the tickets at the afternoon performance the three ticket sellers were short \$200 which was never made good by anyone, and although I sold the evening house, everything was right to the letter, and yet the proprietor of the show and the acting manager did much for some two or three weeks to make it [un]pleasant for me.

With Adam Forepaugh for many years I had one end of his car where I had two beds and the best comfort that I could have even in the best hotels. Yet, when I went to my state room for the two weeks' engagement in Philadelphia, I found they had two men in there whom I did not know, and I was laid out in the wall where

the room was limited and the accommodations anything but good.

The show left Saturday night for Wilmington, Delaware, where they were to show Monday and when the porter told me where I was expected to sleep, I simply took my valise and went down to the Girard Hotel and engaged a room where I remained until Monday morning. Sunday morning about 9:30 while I was eating breakfast, a telegram was received by Bob Campbell, the general agent, who was still in Philadelphia, saying: "Dave Watt is not with the show. Look him up. We cannot get him at the ticket wagon." Mr. Campbell, at the time, was eating breakfast, but did not know that I was in the hotel until he looked around and happened to see me at another table. Bob was a pompous, dignified man, and walking over to my table in a surly kind of a way, wanted to know why I was there and why I did not get to Wilmington with the show. I told him in plain language that it was none of his business, that I was nearer my work than he was to his and that he ought to be in Chicago.

He said: "I hold in my hand a telegram from James Cooper asking me to look you up and send you on to Wilmington."

I said: "You telegraph him that I am at the Girard Hotel at his expense and when the train leaves for Wilmington, I will be on board." I was gone until Monday and when I arrived there both Cooper and McCaddon were waiting to get into the ticket wagon and said to me: "There has got to be different arrangements and we want you to get into the ticket wagon and explain why you did not come to Wilmington with the show."

I said, "There is a state room down there in car number so and so, and everything in it belongs to me and it is my home and has been for 11 years. That is what I want and I will have it or I will stay back and come on the passenger train and you people will pay the cost."

Mr. Cooper said that they would give me my old state room and that they wanted me with the show, every move it made and if there was anything else I wanted to let it be known



now for probably later I would want his private car.

I said to him: "Mr. Cooper, there is no danger of that and yet I think your kind of a car would fit me as well as it does you. The work that has to be done in this wagon takes me all day and well into the night and when I get through I must have a comfortable home to go to." It was not long after this that both Cooper and McCaddon were my friends, for my work was done in a better manner than they had ever seen it done before.

Adam Forepaugh, Jr. was the equestrian director at the time and had his private car to himself and, of course, from start to finish was my friend. Some weeks later the young man came to me and said: "Dave, it looks to me as though the management of the show was on your trail, for only yesterday Mr. Cooper said you were certainly a wonder when it came to selling tickets, paying bills and paying the people, that you were always on time, that you had never missed a payday or asked for any favors of any kind, and we are going to have Dave stay with us as long as we own the show."

The only excuse they had for not thinking well of me at first was the long and bitter fight between the Barnum and the Forepaugh shows for so many years. There was no one with the Forepaugh show when the show was taken over by men that looked good to the new management. My hard work and close attention to business made them lasting friends and they, after the Wilmington, Delaware affair, thought nothing was too good for me. Long before the show closed the season at Richmond, Virginia, they were after me to sign a contract for another year, which I did not do, and this has only added another page to my book of mistakes.

I suppose everybody is interested in knowing when Janesville will have the circus this season, but so far, I am not able to give any light on the subject. This was one season where for two or three weeks the black clouds long glowed, but finally separated and from that time on was perpetual sunshine.

**July 5, 1919**

It was on Sunday, January 13,

1888, that Mr. and Mrs. Burr Robbins invited my wife and I to their winter quarters home to a Sunday dinner and were to give us a ride in their new launch which had been put into the Rock River only a few days before. While eating dinner Mr. Burr Robbins informed us that he would take us back home in his new launch. As he and Sailor Dick, the boss animal man, were to take us, both my wife and I and Mrs. Robbins refused to take any chances.



James E. Cooper, circus owner.

At that time we were having a January thaw, and the river was rising fast. When Burr Robbins found out that the women would not take the chance, he told me that he wanted to talk with me and that we would go to the office. He had already ordered his coachman to take the women riding and that he would keep me in the office until the carriage left and then I would be obliged to walk or take a ride in the launch. When he informed me that the coachman had taken Mrs. Robbins and my wife uptown and that I was to go with them on the launch, I was not long in telling him that the highway looked good to me and that I would have to see the launch operated for a while before I would take any chances.

I walked uptown and Burr Robbins and Sailor Dick made the trip up the

river in the new launch and tied up in the rear of Hemstreet's drug store where they met friends and visited for some three hours, or at least until dusk before they untied the launch and started for home. The balance of the story of the trip I have told you before, for it was under the Court Street Bridge that Burr Robbins collided with the bridge, which caused the terrible accident, and it was some seven weeks that he was under the doctor's care at the Myers Hotel.

As soon as Burr Robbins was able to talk, he sent for me and said "Dave, you will have to go down to the winter quarters and take charge of the show so that it will be ready to go on the road the first of May." A part of the show was underway, the harness makers were busy working, the painters and a few of the performers had arrived, and it was only a few days after I had taken charge of the show at the winter quarters that everything was underway toward getting the show ready to go on the road. It was somewhere near the first of April before Burr Robbins was able to be moved to his home where he spent some three or four hours each day in a big easy chair at the bay window, watching every move as far as possible toward the comple-

tion of the show. Two or three times a day I would consult him on different things pertaining to the show and it was many times that we did not agree. He was not averse to telling me the way he wanted it built or finished so and so, which many times I knew was not right and even at the time I was suspecting that he knew I was right. Yet he did not seem to give me any credit for it until I would declare myself that it must be so. More than once he told me that I was certainly the meanest dispositioned man that he ever had around him and that I thought that I knew more about the business in the three years that I had been with him than he did, but this made but little impression on me when I knew very well that I was right.

One morning I took a list from the harness makers on furnishings that they had to have which meant quite



a bill, including one full side of leather which I bought of Basset, Echlin, Biggs, and when it arrived at the winter quarters, Burr Robbins sent word by Delavan, boss hostler, to send everything back for he would not stand for such extravagance. I happened to be there when the goods came and when Delavan told the delivery man to take everything back, I simply got the harness makers to unload everything into the harness room and I O.K.'d the bill and sent the man back. I immediately went in the house and told Burr Robbins that if I was to fit the show, I must not be interfered with and that he knew full well that I was not buying anything that was not absolutely necessary. "That is all right, but I have to pay the bills, and if you had to pay the bills, I am sure they would not be so large."

While many times we would not agree, the show was out on the road in good shape and to satisfy him on Saturday afternoon, I had the show hitch up exactly as it would be going over the road and made a parade around in front of the big bay window and gave him a chance to look it over before we left the winter quarters. The next day the show was to open and the only thing that he could find fault with in the make-up was one stay chain which was two inches shorter than the other. This was plenty to start him in a rage and to tell me how little I knew about fitting out the show. I said to him: "Governor when your eagle eyes go over the entire show and that is the only thing you find fault with, I am entirely satisfied with my work in fitting out the show for the season's work." I did not see him again until everything was up and ready to start for Delavan. When I went to the house to bid him good-bye, he said: "Dave, I am more than satisfied with the work you have done and I shall not worry again until such time as I will be up and around."

While he was disagreeable many



Burr Robbins

times, he had a good side to him and many times ready to give credit where it belonged. Some few days before this, a young man by the name of Appleby, who had a record that was not given him by a Sunday school teacher, came up and insisted on going with the show. When I informed him he could not come and that he was not wanted, he still hung around the show. He was still there when we started for Delavan and I warned him to go away from the show. Just as I passed the canvas wagon, I noticed it move and going up close to the side of the wagon, I took a big hickory cane out and let it fall hard on the canvas. A yell came from under, for the big cane had fallen on young Appleby's head and he remembered it long, and he did not bother me for the balance of the sea-

son.

For the following elephant story, I am under obligation to my old friend, Dennis Hayes of Milton Junction. Who was owner or part owner of the elephant at the time, I am unable to say.

### America's First Elephant

A now forgotten showman, Hackaliah Bailey, is said to have brought the

first elephant to the United States nearly a hundred years ago, and the animal was a whole show in himself, says the *Christian Science Monitor*. The circus tent had not yet come into being and the elephant was shown in barns in the eastern states that then held the bulk of the population. To prevent the public from seeing the show without charge, the elephant traveled from place to place in the night; but even so, the public refused to be wholly circumvented and small companies gathered with bonfires ready to light when the strange creature came lumbering past on his way to the next town. Sometimes, however, the management defeated this intention by sending along the road a horse built up to look like an elephant in the dark, and when the bonfire had been lighted and burned out, the real elephant followed.



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